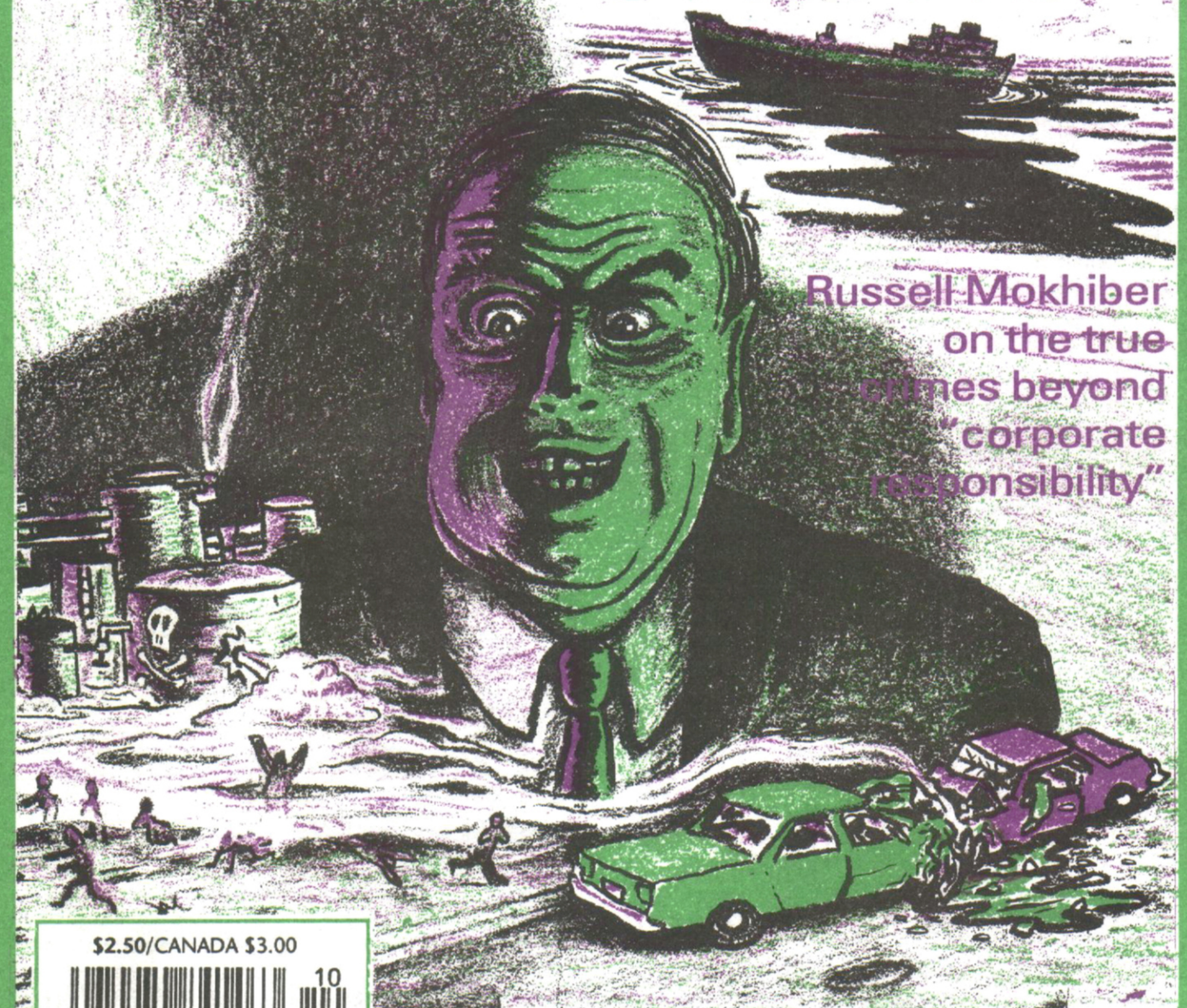


CALIFORNIA'S AFFIRMATIVE ACTION SHOWDOWN

April 1-13, 1996

IN THESE TIMES

TOUCH OF EVIL



Russell Mokhiber
on the true
crimes beyond
"corporate
responsibility"

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Joel Bleifuss on citizens' strategies
to fight the corporate syndicates

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EDITORIAL

DON'T LET HAMAS HAVE ITS WAY

Jewish and Palestinian fanatics, secular as well as religious, like to justify their policies by demonizing each other—and each side has provided the other with lavish opportunities for such self-justification. The most recent example, of course, is the series of suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv by crazed members of Hamas, allegedly carried out in revenge for the killing of “the Engineer,” the Hamas terrorist leader, by Israeli security forces late last year. But the pattern goes back almost 50 years.

The country's earliest terrorist attacks were aimed at Palestinians who remained in Israel when it was being established by U.N. partition. The terrorism was designed to secure a homogeneous Jewish state by driving Arabs out, and it was carried out by right-wing Zionist soldiers of Irgun and the Stern gang.

The best-known of those early attacks occurred in Dir Yassin, a village near Jerusalem. Residents there had signed a nonaggression pact with their Jewish neighbors years before, in 1942, and had not joined the Arab resistance when Israel was founded in 1948. That made them choice targets, and on April 9, 1948, Irgun and Stern gang assassins lined up the village's men, women and children and shot them all. Then they looted the village and fled.

Although a large majority of Palestinian Arabs had opted to remain in the new Israeli state, this attack, and many others less well known, caused a mass exodus, fanned the flames of extremism and revenge, and cemented Arab solidarity against Israel.

That was the beginning. Later terrorist attacks on the part of Israelis and Arabs alike just fed the cycle of violence, making extremism politics as usual on all sides in the Middle East. This process culminated first in the intifada, which finally convinced most Israelis that the struggle to keep the Occupied Territories was a war that could never be won. This realization began what is known as the peace process.

But the peace process also introduced a new round of attacks on both sides from fundamentalists who had a stake in preventing compromise and stoking future confrontations. Baruch Goldstein's slaughter of Palestinians at prayer

in Hebron initiated the terror, and the Hamas bombings have completed the cycle—or at least its first phase.

It's easy to deplore this process, and to call for a peaceful solution that provides for Israeli security within its pre-1967 borders, as well as for an autonomous Palestinian state. But the current trial of Yigal Amir, the confessed assassin of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, illustrates how elusive that peace may be. Amir, a smugly self-satisfied religious zealot, makes a perfect match for the Muslim fundamentalists of Hamas. Smirking with the knowledge that he is gaining a small but stri-

dent following among Israeli fundamentalists, Amir seems a grim portent for the future of peace in the region.

That is why it is so important for people of good will and humane principle to defend the Oslo Agreement, no matter how imperfect it is. And it is reason to applaud President Clinton's rallying of international support for the policies of Rabin's successor, Shimon Peres, as well as his implicit opposition to Likud in the upcoming Israeli elections—demonstrated by his presence at the memorial services for the victims of the Hamas bombings.

How pathetic—and infuriating—then that right-wing Zionist pundits still pollute our media with their atavistic mindset of Jewish triumphalism. Take, for example, the ravings of columnist Charles Krauthammer, who accuses Yasser Arafat of “deception,” and of being the “father of Palestinian terrorism,” and then suggests that the peace process be stopped because the Palestinians “have gotten everything promised in Oslo,” and Israel has gotten nothing. Although they would describe the process differently, this is just the conclusion that Hamas terrorists hope for. And, of course, it is totally dishonest, coming from an enemy of peace who has always opposed concessions to the Palestinians.

*Why supporters
of the Oslo
Agreement must
stay the course
in the face of
Arab and Israeli
terror.*

After almost half a century of unspeakable violence and terror, sane leaders on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian divide have come to realize that neither can win without granting the other its minimally acceptable needs. The peace process is an imperfect vehicle with which to reach that goal, but it is a step in the right direction and the only realistic path to follow. The alternative is 50 more years of smoldering hostility, suffering and insecurity.

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IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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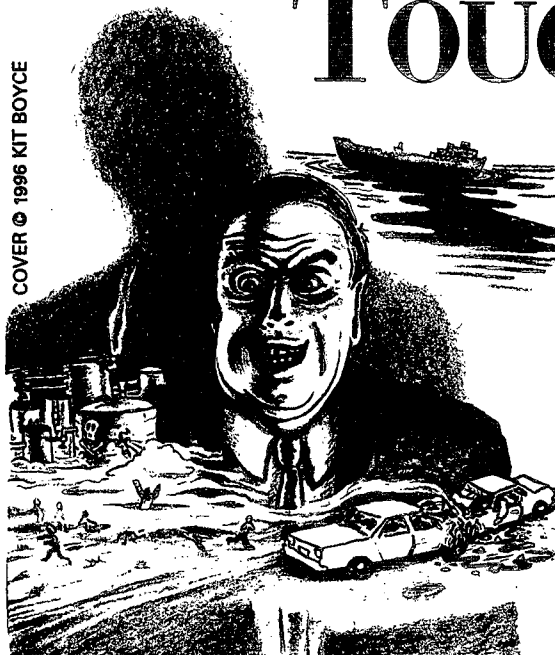


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LETTERS

Dead-on walking

Wow! Do I ever disagree with Linda DeLibero's review of *Dead Man Walking* ("Capital crime," February 19). And I do so from the somewhat unique perspective of being the mother of a 7-year-old kidnap/murder victim who does not believe her daughter's memory is honored by killing anyone in her name.

DeLibero claims that the movie is confused, overblown and too Hollywood. The truth is that the situation depicted in *Dead Man Walking* is mild compared to most real-life murders and executions, which are replete with blatant injustices you'd think could only happen on film. I wonder how many death rows DeLibero has visited, and how she can so blithely refute the reality of the scenarios and characters depicted—elements of which, incidentally, are based on the painstaking research and massive input of the film's principal consultant, Sister Helen Prejean, who

has been active in Louisiana's death rows for many years now.

If feelings have been "jerked across the chasms that divide the opponents and champions of state execution," then I applaud the effort. It's high time people have a clarified view of a heretofore hidden event, truthfully presented, which may precipitate an honest reflection/re-evaluation on the part of the viewer. DeLibero claims that the movie tells us nothing that we don't already know about the issue, but it's clear she doesn't know much about the issue or she never would have made such a claim.

As the mother of a murder victim, I respect that Tim Robbins has not minced one iota of the horror of the murder that the film so graphically portrayed in order to promote the cause of the offender. The suffering and terror of the victims was utterly obvious. So, too, the anguish of their parents. I know—I've been there, and I've been working with victims' families for 20-

some years since. DeLibero writes of the bereaved parents depicted in the film that "their origins render them incapable of transcending" their anger; this simply indicates that she hasn't been around very many victims' families. The parents' response in the film is by far the norm, not because they can't rise above it, but because, first of all, it's a normal, human response, and second, our culture and our criminal justice system encourage and reinforce that mindset.

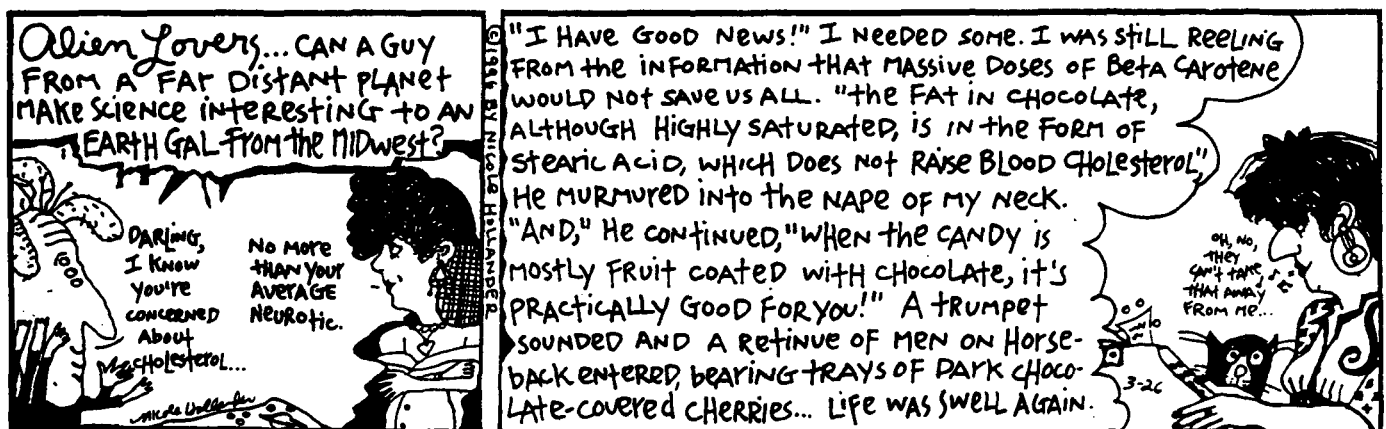
Less often, but more often than people realize, does a parent begin to recognize that healing will only come by letting go of the hate, and that if they don't, they'll give the offender another victim. Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation is a national organization comprised of folks (of which I'm one) who've learned that lesson.

Susan Sarandon's Sr. Helen is criticized for being too "pure," "impossibly good," and yet religious women's communities across the country are praising the film's depiction (finally) of a nun who's savvy, smart, struggling through her humanness into sagacity, and in the streets with and on the side of the poor. What does DeLibero want—a cussing, spitting, bitchy witch with cleavage to ensure that Susan retains her "earthy quality"? She's supposed to be a nun, for heaven's sake! Talk about being "Hollywood."

But in DeLibero's eyes, Tim Robbins, et al., are damned if they do and damned if they don't. Methinks she doth protest too much. Maybe she

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



should go see it again and try to find out why so many of her own buttons were pushed so hard, resulting in such a negative, contrary review. I—and I know I speak for many others—am extremely grateful for the courageous gift and educational value of *Dead Man Walking*.

Marietta Jaeger
Detroit

Doctrinaire

Linda DeLibero's main complaint about *Dead Man Walking*—that “the picture won't make any difference at all in the debate over capital punishment”—is incorrect.

I went to the movie with two male friends. We liked the movie and it prompted us to discuss the issue of capital punishment. All three of us are left of center, and we found that we were all ambivalent about the death penalty. None of us could shed tears for death row inmates in light of what are often quite heinous crimes, but the fact that innocent inmates are sometimes killed, along with the racial imbalance of the death row population, were the deciding factors in our opposition to it.

On the other hand, DeLibero has already proclaimed the grounds on which we are supposed to stake our claims: that the state has no right to take human life. All we need to know, she says, is that the condemned man is a human being in order to argue against state-sponsored execution. But capital punishment is not an issue with clear, easy answers, and a person's support of or opposition to it will likely depend on many different factors, including emotion.

I give Tim Robbins credit for treating his audience as if they were intelligent enough to make their own conclusions and decisions. DeLibero warns us that the movie is rigged from the start because both Robbins and Sarandon are outspoken opponents of capital punishment, as if this should disqualify them from making a movie on the subject. I thought they did a

fine job of portraying Matthew Poncellet as a person filled with contradictions; sometimes likable, often despicable. I never once felt that Robbins' and Sarandon's personal beliefs were being shoved down my throat. But then what do I know? I'm a moviegoer, not a movie critic.

I think we need to support the small handful of actors/actresses/producers who have progressive views—like Tim Robbins and Susan Sarandon—and not treat them with scorn when they try to make movies that mean something. They may fall short of perfection, but when I think of all the time I've wasted watching escapist Hollywood movies, I have nothing but praise for Robbins' and Sarandon's efforts.

Alan Benson
Berkeley Springs, W.Va.

Elitist

Regarding Linda DeLibero's review of *Dead Man Walking*: In my near 12 years of teaching writing classes in prisons, and my extensive correspondence with prisoners (death row, as well), I have learned to see through media images of prison, the faces of wardens and guards, prisoners themselves, and the walls around them all, to the actual identities within. I'm a writer, was chairman of the PEN Prison Writing Committee for five years, and am the new director of the PEN Prison Writing Workshop Program. I have taught in Attica, in Sing Sing, in Clinton (Dannemora), Central Prison (Raleigh, N.C.), Rikers Island, etc., and this movie made me feel right at home. The prison scenes were authentic: one-dimensional, and claustrophobic to infinity. Other poets and writers I know who also teach inside and have seen the film agree.

DeLibero missed that priceless buffet in the background on the day of execution. She missed Sarandon's exchange with the guard outside the joint. That dialogue is 100 percent accurate: a constant, mute, cynical indifference that characterizes state

puppets. She missed the scenes with that marvelous lawyer, and the scenes with black people. She missed those high-tension visits to the families of the victims. Who can forget that one visit, with the family who thinks she came to their house because she's for the death penalty! They say, right out of *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, “We thought you were one of us.” The audience where I saw it was in an electric-angst in that scene. Ah, yes, it's so much easier to deny and reject the film's complexities, and to get nasty about it.

As for the killer, he was in truth an unformed (abused) little boy forever following what the older, paternal killer did, trying to impress him, which is such an inherent characteristic in the mass of incarcerated immature men, and you may be sure of killers, as is so clear in prison writing. I was shaken and moved by the scene where the killer breaks down. Sister Helen took him farther than he could respond to; he had to break. She got to him and tore him apart because she cared for him; maybe she loved him: Be a cynic critic, it's a hell of a lot easier than to see violent men weep, right before your eyes, as I have in my classes.

DeLibero's message is clear: Let the big state killers kill. Silence and aversion always indicate let it be. And this is the reason why your publication is ineffective in the public arena: Her cultural attitude is elitist, educated and too often academic.

Fielding Dawson
New York City

Atypical liberals

In response to Linda DeLibero's ranting tirade against Tim Robbins' *Dead Man Walking*, at least one point ought to be made: DeLibero apparently fears for what she must consider “the stupid masses” who will so easily be “manipulated” (her word). Since when was truth manipulative? I hope she will find it in herself to forgive Robbins for producing a feature film and not a documentary, since she

Continued on page 30

InSHORT



Atossa Soltani, RAN's Rainforest Wood Campaigner and the coordinator of the action, calls a "cycle of destruction that starts with harvesting mahogany and ends with cultural disintegration." The *Frota's* cargo, protesters explained to Coast Guard and Customs officials in Savannah, was more than likely contraband: Most Latin American mahogany—more than half of which makes its way to the United States—is logged illegally. More than 70 Brazilian environmental and indigenous groups, along with Greenpeace, RAN and others, are calling

for a moratorium on all mahogany logging and a boycott of the trade.

Harvesting mahogany does enormous damage to the Amazon and its inhabitants.

Because mahogany

grows so sporadically in the rainforest, each tree logged requires clearing 25 others. According to some studies, nearly 3,000 square feet of forest is destroyed per tree. Timber companies have carved more than 1,500 miles of illegal roads through the Amazon basin, opening the wilderness to thousands of settlers who dislocate the traditional rainforest communities and clear the remaining trees for fields and pastures.

Indigenous communities trying to protect their habitats have often met severe reprisals. In 1988, a gang of hired gunmen led by Brazilian timber magnate Oscar Castello Branco murdered 14 Tikuna Indians and wounded 22 in the state of Amazonas. According to information provided to Friends of the

Earth by Brazil's Indian affairs agency FUNAI, similar violence has struck eight different indigenous groups, and others have reported threats of violence

FOREST FOR THE TREES

On the morning of March 4, the day before the Georgia primary, environmental activists from Earth First!, the Rainforest Action Network (RAN) and other grass-roots groups descended on a Brazilian ship docked in Savannah's harbor. Two activists climbed the *Frota Belem's* central mast and unfurled a 15-by-40-foot banner

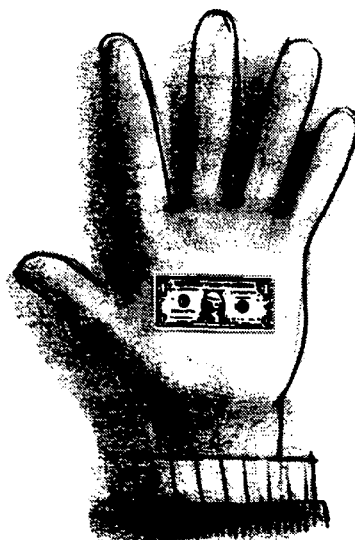
that read: "Ban Mahogany Imports, Save the Amazon!" Others blocked the *Frota* from unloading its cargo of Brazilian mahogany, a precious hardwood logged from indigenous peoples' land in the Amazon.

Organizers hoped the event would highlight American complicity in what

Wage warrior

WHILE THE 104TH CONGRESS IS BUSY DOLING OUT FAVORS TO the rich, at least one Democrat seems interested in economic justice. Last year, Rep. Marty Sabo (D-MN) introduced legislation to raise the minimum wage by 50 percent—from \$4.25 to \$6.50 an hour. Sabo explained that his proposal would restore the minimum wage to its 1968 real value.

At the same time, Sabo put forth the Income Equity Act, a proposal that would curtail the right of corporations to deduct extravagant executive salaries as a "business expense." Sabo would change the current law and allow corporations to deduct no more than 25 times the salary of the lowest-paid full-time worker. The typical corporate CEO currently is paid 190 times more than his average subordinate. —Joel Bleifuss



Earth by Brazil's Indian affairs agency FUNAI, similar violence has struck eight different indigenous groups, and others have reported threats of violence

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PPALL-O-METER

THE IN THESE TIMES INDEX OF INDECENCIES



Mistakes were made 8.9

If you're ever arrested in Mozambique, make sure to bring along some groceries—preferably several years' worth. Responding to reports that numerous inmates had starved to death in police holding cells, Mozambique's Minister of the Interior,

they have to accept the responsibility. If the brain doesn't function, the body suffers. What's the problem?"

Oplate of the masses 4.2

With a little help from on high, Illinois Republican Al Salvi hopes to fill the shoes of

Sen. Paul Simon, who is retiring this year. In February, Salvi's sister-in-law, Cindy Nussler, sent \$5 checks to 900 Catholic churches, asking that a special

mass be said for Salvi, a staunch anti-abortionist, in the week prior to the March 19 primary. Unfortunately for Salvi, Catholic canon maintains that masses "can never be used ... to promote the candidacy of anyone seeking public office." Besides, the cost of a special mass is \$10, not \$5.

Manuel Antonio, blamed them for getting arrested in the first place. "Is the Minister of the Interior responsible for feeding them?" he demanded indignantly in the newspaper *Noticias*. "Who tells these prisoners to commit mistakes? ... They go to jail because they make mistakes, and



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Cleansing the palate 5.8

A guest editorial in the March 11 *Newsweek* decried the "mongrelization" of cultures and suggested it was time for "some ethnic cleansing." The column wasn't the work of Slobodan Milosevic, or even some overenthusiastic Buchanan adviser, but of New York food writer Regina Schrambling, upset at finding her favorite restaurants invaded by Thai barbecue pizza and mu shu duck burritos. Next week: Gela to Genocide!

A little consideration 6.7

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, some of the staunchest affirmative action opponents in California politics have been practicing a more informal kind of affirmative action of their own for years—working behind the scenes to get well-connected (if not always academically stellar) students admitted to UCLA. Gov. Pete Wilson had made several "casual requests" along these lines, the *Times* reported; and one anti-affirmative action regent reportedly made 32 such requests of his own, on behalf of relatives and the children of his business partner.

group that monitors human rights, commercial interests have begun filing injunctions to reverse indigenous land claims in eight different areas.

The Clinton administration, meanwhile, continues to side with the Amazon's despoilers. On the day activists in Savannah leapt aboard the *Frota*, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher happened to be paying a visit to the Amazon. Seeking to promote a "greener" State Department, Christopher made it clear that this would in no way curtail future logging. "The resources of the rainforest—your resources," Christopher told Brazilian officials, "hold untold promise."

—Eyal Press

JUSTICE DENIED?

During the long, dry years when Lane Kirkland was president of the AFL-CIO, some of labor's more feisty types looked for a way to build a more militant movement despite the federation's allergy to street action and coalition-building. In 1987, they hit on an idea: Rather than wait endlessly for stodgy local labor bodies to organize, why not create a national network of labor-community coalitions for workers' rights? The new coalition, calling itself Jobs with Justice (JWJ), set out with three goals: to defend workers' standard of living, their job security and their right to organize and strike.

In the years since, JWJ has developed into a loose network of 29 local labor-community coalitions around the country. Funded with tiny annual grants from a number of large international unions (as well as some local monies), JWJ coalitions have supported strikes and organizing drives, occupied NLRB offices to demand the rights of workers to organize, and sponsored campaigns for health care reform and striker-replacement legislation. But despite their energetic organizing on the margins of the labor movement, coalition activists never got the old AFL-CIO leadership's offi-

as recently as last October.

Despite strong laws protecting the Amazon from commercial encroachment, the Brazilian government has tended to look the other way when conflict arises. It has often failed to enforce court rulings declaring logging illegal on native lands. Worse still, a new law, ratified on January 8 by Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, may effectively negate any current restrictions on commercial

exploitation of indigenous land. Decree 1775, dubbed the "genocide decree" by human rights activists, grants commercial interests—including mahogany loggers, gold miners and cattle ranchers—"the right to contest" the demarcation of indigenous land reserves throughout the Amazon.

Observers expect the new law to have devastating consequences. Already, according to the Indigenist Missionary Council, a missionary

cial stamp of approval, or even coverage in its official journal, the *AFL-CIO News*.

When a new AFL-CIO leadership was elected last October pledging to "put the movement back into the labor movement," some JWJ activists hoped they'd finally get the federation's sanction and support.

Not so fast. At a meeting in January, Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka—a JWJ founding member—told Massachusetts JWJ representatives he wasn't sure the coalition was still the best vehicle for building local labor-community coalitions. Instead, he proposed, it might make more sense to encourage local AFL-CIO central labor councils to fill that role. (Central labor councils are local AFL-CIO affiliates intended to coordinate the work of unions locally.) In some places, JWJ locals have taken on the work that the often sclerotic local bodies couldn't or wouldn't attempt.

It's not surprising that Jobs with Justice's role would be questioned by the new federation leaders, since the coalition was created to fill a vacuum left by the lackluster old leadership.

Stuart Acuff, who heads the Atlanta Central Labor Council and is a JWJ activist, says he believes the new federation leadership is committed to the goals of Jobs with Justice, and that it's good to have a broad discussion about how best to carry out those goals. "It's important to think of Jobs with Justice as a vehicle and not as an institution," he says.

But the Massachusetts JWJ activists

maintain that JWJ coalitions still have an important role to play. "If you want to put pressure on central labor councils to change, the best way to do it is with JWJ," argues Steve Early, an international representative for the Communications Workers of America and an activist in Massachusetts JWJ. And, he and others argue, even active central labor councils need JWJ coalitions: Not all community groups want to be junior partners in a union-controlled central labor body.

Regardless of the AFL-CIO's attitude toward JWJ, it's up to the presidents of the international unions supporting JWJ to decide whether they'll continue to fund the coalition nationally.

Meanwhile, Massachusetts JWJ has built a strong base of local support, says Early, and it will survive either way. "We're not down on our knees here, rattling our tin cup," he says. "We'd rather have the federation's support. But we've done this work for a long time, we're doing it now, and we'll keep doing it."

—Laura McClure

Exploit Haitian

WALT DISNEY, SEARS, WAL-MART AND J.C. Penney are among the U.S. companies that fatten their corporate coffers through violations of Haiti's minimum wage laws. According to a report from the National Labor Committee, a New York-based labor and human rights organization, Haiti-based contractors who operate sweatshops that produce "Mickey Mouse" and "Pocahontas" pajamas pay their workers as little as 12 cents an hour—18 cents less than Haiti's 30-cent-an-hour minimum wage. A Haitian seamstress earns about 7 cents for making a pair of "Pocahontas" pajamas that Wal-Mart then sells for \$11.97. That works out to be about one half of 1 percent of the U.S. sales price.

Meanwhile, Wal-Mart's much-advertised "Made in USA" label is just a marketing gimmick, the labor committee reports: The retail giant is selling Haitian-made "Made in USA" sports apparel that bears national football, basketball and baseball franchise logos. This fashion line is distributed by the VF Corp. (maker of Wrangler and Lee jeans), and the Haitian workers in its employ just clear the minimum wage at between 30 and 33 cents an hour. In 1994 Lawrence Pugh, the CEO of VF Corp., earned a salary of \$1,888,000—an hourly wage of \$907.69, or 3,025 times the salary of one of his Haitian workers.—J.B.



113 TERRY L. QUINN



The Guccione spin on harassment

More and more media outlets are facing embarrassing suits from female employees alleging sexual harassment and discrimination. But one publisher has launched a counterattack—in the media, of course.

Facing a trial on sexual harassment and discrimination charges later this year, Bob Guccione Jr., the editor and publisher of *Spin*, is using the press to attack his accuser. In the *New York Post* earlier this month, Guccione, the 40-year-old son of *Penthouse* founder Bob Guccione Sr.—lashed out at Staci Bonner, a former *Spin* staffer. In 1994, Bonner brought a lawsuit charging that both Guccione and *Spin* harassed female employees while systematically blocking their opportunities to advance within the company.

Bonner's suit has been winding its way through federal court for nearly two years, but as the trial date draws near, Guccione is working himself into a high dudgeon of public outrage. His coming-out took place in the form of an item he fed to his buddy, Richard Johnson, editor of the city's most influential gossip column. In the March 9 item, Guccione accused Bonner of trying to embarrass him into making a settlement with her. "It's highway robbery," Guccione told the *Post*. "But the extortion won't stop until people start saying, 'We're not going to be held up.'"

Who's extorting whom?

Bonner, who is now in her late 20s, supervised *Spin*'s research department from 1990 to 1993.

During that time, she was "subjected to an environment that was hostile, abusive and offensive to women generally," according to papers filed by Bonner's attorney.

Guccione and other top male editors "treated the office of *Spin* as their sexual playground," according to Bonner's complaint. It catalogs a long list of charges, including fostering an atmosphere of "sexual favoritism," in which women who engaged in sexual relations with Guccione and other top editors were rewarded with promotions; hiring attractive interns with the hopes of later seducing them; asking a senior editor her bra size and then snapping her bra; boasting openly about sexual achievements; and debating which *Playboy* model had the best breasts while ogling the skin mag in the *Spin* offices.

Not surprisingly, Guccione denies these charges. To hear Guccione tell it, he is leading a crusade against the

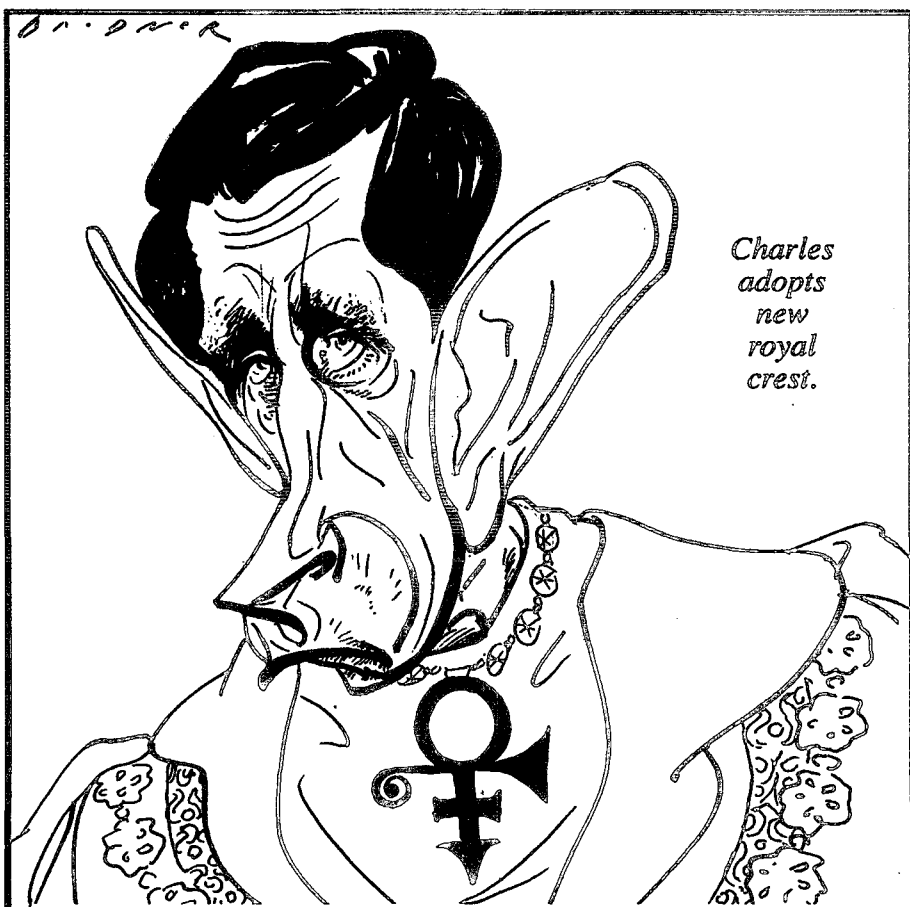
excesses of political correctness. And like many anti-PC crusaders, Guccione professes to have the victims' best interests at heart. "All this crying wolf stuff hurts the legitimate claims," he told the *Post*.

But Betsy Plevan, Guccione's attorney, seems to lack her client's reforming zeal. "A lot depends on how you characterize things," she says of Bonner's charges. "This is a group of people who worked very closely together," she continues. "I'm not going to say that in five years no one said anything, but it's very easy to make an allegation."

Meanwhile, Guccione's crusade has infuriated Bonner's lawyer, Hillary Richard. Says Richard: "As if it's not bad enough for him to wreak significant havoc on her while she's working for him ... he has to victimize her all over again by having his close buddy write a completely erroneous piece about her in his gossip column."

TOMORROW'S NEWS TONIGHT

By Steve Brodner



Charles adopts new royal crest.

RAINBOW RECKONING

A year ago Jesse Jackson was seriously considering a primary challenge to President Clinton. Now, despite his continuing defense of outsider protests, Jackson has firmly allied himself with the Democratic Party's 1996 election efforts. At the annual policy conference of his Rainbow Coalition, held in early March in Chicago, Jackson shared the stage not only with old allies like Reps. John Conyers and John Lewis but also such Democratic establishment figures as House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt, Democratic National Committee Chairman Don Fowler and even Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, with whom Jackson has long fought.

"It was a group that you couldn't imagine being assembled in 1992—and certainly not in '88—and Rev. Jackson intended that to be noticed," says Steve Cobble, coordinator of the Rainbow's 1996 congressional campaign.

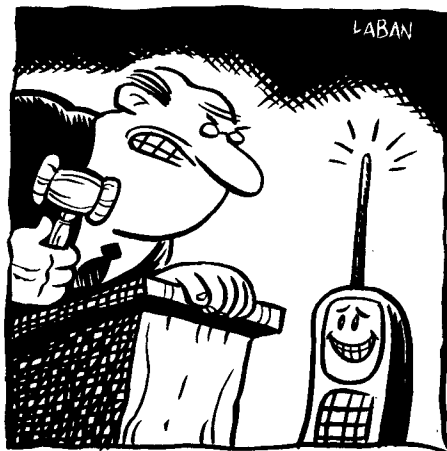
Although Jackson still prods Democrats to develop an urban policy and to attract more blacks and low-income people to register and vote, the Rainbow has allied itself with official party campaign organizations to re-elect Clinton and regain Democratic control of the House. Two developments brought Jackson more firmly into the Democratic fold this year: Clinton's decision to defend affirmative action and the specter of Republican control of all branches of government. Despite "tension over direction of the party," Jackson argued, the party must close ranks. "Bill Clinton may not be the answer," he said. "In 1996, he is definitely our option."

Jackson noted that the Republicans clinched their House majority by a combined margin of 38,378 votes in 13 districts, where a total of 231,000 African-Americans failed to register or vote. He urged Clinton to call a White House conference to formulate and adopt an urban reinvestment policy

Taking callers to court

THE NEXT TIME TELEMARKETERS INTERRUPT YOUR DINNER, DON'T JUST GET mad—sue them. The Center for the Study of Commercialism, a Washington-based public-interest group, has put out a "Stop the Calls" information packet that provides step-by-step instructions on how to take telemarketers to court. The Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991 requires all companies that solicit over the telephone to keep a list of people who ask not to be called at home. If you request not to be bothered, and if, within one year, a company

calls you again, you can sue for between \$500 and \$1,500—provided that the company "willfully or knowingly violates" the law. Michael Jacobson, one of the center's co-founders, sued Citibank for calling him twice at home after being told not to and won a \$750 out-of-court settlement. "Stop the Calls" can be ordered for \$3 from the Center for the Study of Commercialism, 1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, #300, Washington, DC 20009. —J.B.



that would motivate traditional urban constituencies—both black and white—to go to the polls. Jackson also called for the Democrats to fight for the South with a populist economic message that can appeal to blacks and whites. "The only white male on the national stage saying white people are hurting is Buchanan," he said. "We can't let him have that stage. ... Whites in the South need Medicare more than they need prayer in the school."

In a move that complements organized labor's strategy, Jackson plans to campaign in roughly 80 congressional districts where the race is likely to be tight, and eventually to concentrate on 10 to 20 districts. (In the first formal address by an AFL-CIO leader to a Rainbow Coalition crowd, President John Sweeney pledged to the gathering "to always be there for you.")

While some of the conference's high-profile gatherings attracted big crowds, most of its organizational workshops were sparsely attended. Once envisioned as a grass-roots organization with members and active

chapters, the Rainbow now really consists of Jackson and an office support team of about 20 people, a computer database with a quarter-million names, and a network of ministers, local union officials and community leaders for local rallies and events. The coalition can only provide limited follow-through in the detailed work of voter registration and mobilization.

Jackson and his son Jesse Jr., who last fall won a Chicago congressional seat, will travel by bus throughout the South (and in the state of Illinois, to help Democrats regain the state legislature), hold rallies at high schools and churches, and pressure governors to implement the often stalled "motor voter" registration programs. All this may help Clinton and the Democrats win; equally helpful is the simple fact that Jackson chose not to challenge Clinton and highlight the president's glaring weaknesses to the party's core voters. For that alone, Jackson should collect several chits from Clinton and the Democrats.

—David Moberg

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A STERN SCENARIO

When John Sweeney took over as president of the AFL-CIO last fall, he left behind an uneasy alliance in charge of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which he had headed for 15 years. The detente between the union's conservative and progressive factions began to crumble soon after it was arranged, but the progressive faction, led by organizing director Andy Stern, now seems certain to win in the union's convention later this month.

In December, SEIU's executive board unanimously named Sweeney's longtime secretary-treasurer, Richard Cordtz, 74, as president. The board also picked Betty Bednarczyk, a 60-year-old union vice president and president of a Minneapolis health care workers local, as vice president over Gus Bevana. Bevana is the \$400,000-a-year head of a 70,000-member New York local made up mainly of building maintenance employees. Nearly half of them went on strike this winter but ended up with a weak contract in part because Bevana conducted the strike ineptly—spitefully refusing any aid from Sweeney, for example.

Cordtz, who needed Sweeney's backing, pledged support for the Sweeney tradition of vigorous organizing, endorsed greater union democracy and embraced the reform-minded report of the union's Committee on the Future, which Bednarczyk headed.

Yet soon after his election Cordtz, who had close ties to Bevana and other conservative, occasionally corrupt, local leaders, brought in Detroit-based labor attorney Bruce Miller as his right-hand man. Miller, who has opposed reform movements in the Steelworkers and the Teamsters, angered many union staff members with his interrogations and interference in their work. Bevana attacked the Committee on the Future report as a threat to local autonomy—which is to say, his ability to run his fiefdom

with few constraints.

The report wanted to set new standards for locals—among other reforms, it recommended raising the amount spent on organizing and prohibiting union leaders from drawing double salaries. Conservatives like Bevana felt international union staffers (many of them younger, often militant, workers brought in from outside SEIU or the labor movement) would threaten their power. Eventually Cordtz, switching positions, decided not to support the committee report. Consequently, Bednarczyk said she wouldn't run with him, and Cordtz picked Bevana as his running mate.

This prompted Stern, 45, the one-time leader of a reform local who has directed SEIU's successful organizing efforts since 1983, to run for president with Bednarczyk. He has recruited a slate to fill new executive vice president positions with other black, Latino and women candidates. Long considered

one of the most likely heirs to Sweeney, Stern quickly organized majority support from local leaders, including a faction of democratic reform locals that had been critical of Sweeney—even though neither the committee report nor Stern supports direct membership election of top officers, one of the faction's key demands. Soon afterward, Cordtz dropped out of the race.

Stern pledged to increase efforts on three fronts. He promised to increase the union's strategic organizing across all of certain targeted industries. Also, "There will be more grass-roots political activity," he says. "We believe in independent political activity. We're not chained to any party. Third, we need a culture of membership participation. We need members involved in all areas." Even with Stern's near-certain election in April, conflict over the union's direction—and efforts to persuade all locals to join the march—is likely to continue. —David Moberg

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

By Peter Hannan



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THE FIRST STONE

THE NEW ABOLITIONISTS

By Joel Bleifuss

Take a step back and consider the madness that afflicts our world. The Earth's last great forests are cut down, entire species of animals and plants are shunted toward extinction, and chemical toxins poison our food and water. Around the world, billions of people endure a wretched life amid social decay. Millions of others, who once prospered, find their livelihoods stripped from them. Some citizens organize, lobby and vote to reverse this downward spiral. But the media, the regulatory agencies and the electoral process are beyond the reach of human reason. They are in the thrall of beings whose power mocks that of mortals.

I am not talking about aliens, but corporations. In 1886, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Santa Clara County vs. Southern Pacific Railroad*, granted the rights of natural persons to corporate entities, in a willfully perverse interpretation of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees due process and equal protection under the law to all U.S. citizens. Thus empowered, these fleshless beings have affixed themselves symbiotically to human host organisms: the CEOs and chairmen of the board who are paid millions to manage the labor and resources that fuel the corporate mission. Indeed, these executives are required by law to do their best to increase the profits of the spectral creations that employ them. To that end, they hire lawyers, flacks and lobbyists to ensure that public policy advances the expansion of these seemingly immortal corporate beings.

In recent years, corporations have broken the last vestigial links to the human communities from which they arose. And, in order to evolve into leaner, and meaner, entities capable of competing against their global rivals, modern corporations have begun to shed surplus human labor.

In response, some politicians have embarked on belated and feeble efforts to rein the beast in. Some well-meaning liberals have responded to "downsizing" with calls for tax incentives to encourage corporate responsibility. For example, Sens. Tom Daschle (D-SD) and Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) have proposed the creation of a special corporate class, the "R-corporations," with the "R" standing for responsible, not rapacious.

Richard Grossman, co-director of the Program on Corpo-

rations, Law and Democracy, a Boston-based group, believes these reformers are, at best, deluded. In a February letter to Ralph Nader, Grossman urged the nascent presidential candidate not to support these quarter-measures. "It is so premature, so limited, so diversionary," wrote this neo-abolitionist. "Why shut off debate on logical aspirations, and on fundamental causation? What's to be gained today by granting more incentives to corporate leaders who promise to cause less harm, before citizen anger has had a chance to focus?"

Grossman is helping to focus that anger by outlining ways for people to put "corporate fictions" back under human

control. This, he claims, is a simple matter of reasserting the hard-fought constitutional right of citizens to govern themselves. As he put it in a recent interview: "Are we the people? Or are we not?"

Since helping found the Program on Corporations, Law and Democracy in 1993, Grossman has stumped through 15 states, sponsoring weekend-long "rethinking the corporation" seminars. "We are looking to define the corporation," says Grossman. "Not regulate it around the edges."

His critique is gaining currency in some legal circles. Last month in Eugene, Ore., Grossman delivered one of the keynote speeches at the 1996 Public Interest Environmental Law Conference, hosted by the University of Oregon Law School.

In his address, Grossman invoked the spirit of Henry Demarest Lloyd. In his 1894 book, *Wealth Against Commonwealth*, Lloyd—a prominent Progressive-era reformer—wrote: "We are calling upon [those who control corporate] power and property, as mankind called upon kings in their day, to be good and kind, wise and sweet, and we are calling in vain. We are asking them not to be what we have made them to be. We put power into their hands and ask them not to use it as power." That is as true today as it was 100 years ago. Said Grossman, "We have to understand that it's what corporations are designed to do that is the source of their harm." He went on to tell his audience:

We're saying it is illegitimate for corporate fictions to divide and conquer us; to define our labor; control our wealth; demarcate the commons; write our laws; elect our officials; poison our food; indoctrinate our children; use job blackmail and control of information, the press and money to run our local, state and federal governments. ... We're not suggesting that folks work harder to resist each chemical one at a time; each clear cut one at a time; each mass layoff one at a time; each toxic dump one at a time; each corporate purchase of a law or of an election one at a time. We're advocating citizen authority over the subordinate entity that is the modern, giant, corporation. ... We are not about bestowing new rewards and incentives upon corpo-

rate leaders in order for them to cause a little less harm.

The Program on Corporations, Law and Democracy has put forth a number of possible actions to place corporations under the control of civil society. That list includes:

- Recharter corporations to limit their powers and make them subordinate to the sovereign people.
- Establish worker and/or community control over production units of corporations in order to protect the property rights of workers and communities.
- Initiate referendum campaigns, or take action through legislative bodies—and in the courts—to strip from corporations constitutional rights intended for natural persons.

Grossman says that popular action should begin at the state level, since states have the power to charter corporate operations and regulate corporate actions. Anti-corporate campaigns are already off the ground in Wisconsin, Oregon and Maine.

In Madison, Wis., Jane Anne Morris is helping organize Democracy Unlimited of Wisconsin, a group that is being legally established as a cooperative rather than a not-for-profit corporation. Morris, who holds a Ph.D. in corporate anthropology, says the group is preparing a "people's indictment" against Exxon, which plans to strip-mine a large chunk of central Wisconsin; Monsanto, whose bovine growth hormone threatens the state's dairy industry; and Pepisco, which is heavily invested in Burma's military dictatorship.

Once the indictments are handed down, Democracy Unlimited will seek to revoke the "certificates of authority" that permit these felonious corporations to do business in Wisconsin. The group is exploring ways that Wisconsin can strip corporations of their legal status as persons. For example, Democracy Unlimited might push for an amendment to the state constitution that would read something like this: "In the State of Wisconsin corporations shall not be considered to be constitutional persons." To help realize its agenda, Morris says Democracy Unlimited will "hit the county fairs" this summer, talking to Wisconsinites about how to confront corporate rule.

In eastern Oregon, Karen Coulter co-directs the Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project. Currently, she and other environmentalists have set their sights on three timber companies: Weyerhaeuser, Boise Cascade and Plum Creek. Such campaigns gain momentum, she says, when people realize that corporations "are not blank entities, but have names and faces behind them who should be held accountable." For example, last April corporate abolitionists converged on George Weyerhaeuser's home in Tacoma, Wash. Coulter recalls that for several hours they partied to tunes like Casey Neill's "Dancing on the Ruins of Multinational Corporations" and then ceremonially revoked Weyerhaeuser's state charter.

Coulter is currently helping organize a May 20 National Day of Action to End Corporate Dominance. Each group

participating in the event will target a corporation of its own choosing.

On the other side of the continent, in Maine, the state chapter of the Program on Corporations, Law and Democracy is working closely with the 2nd Maine Militia. The militia is the result of Maine novelist Carolyn Chute's first foray into politics. Last Christmas Eve, Chute, author of *The Beans of Egypt Maine* and *Merry Men*, published an op-ed article in the *Maine Sunday Telegram* inviting folks to join her crusade. She wrote, in part:

Many other militias and many individuals blame gays, blacks, Jews, Spanish-speaking folks, welfare mums, illegal drugs, seat belts, schools without prayers, women with shoes, abortions, environmentalists, unseen communist forces and so-called liberals. Meanwhile, the so-called liberals blame men with guns, men who whistle and wink at women, women who like whistles and winks, women who like waiting on men, unseatbelted people and what they call "uneducated white trash." The whole of America is squabbling over all these details while huge corporations smilingly take more than 50 percent off the top of the federal budget for subsidies, including outright handouts for researching new business opportunities in other countries where they can exploit foreign workers like they exploit us, all in the name of "free enterprise" and "individual rights." ... The 2nd Maine Militia is planning big. ... This is the true family values militia. We welcome everybody. We hate nobody. ... We will not listen to any campaign promises except radical reform. ... We are just a bunch of regular hard-working angry Maine people who are not going to sit around any more like a pen of castrated sheep.

Since that call, the 2nd Maine Militia has branched into four regional units and begun to act. On March 8, for example, about 125 people went to Augusta and lobbied their legislators to take human rights away from corporations.

Peter Killian, a former labor organizer at International Paper, has been working closely with Chute and Grossman. "We are trying to start a debate on the role of public corporations," he says, "and then take that debate into the summer and into the election and into the next year."

The 2nd Maine Militia's tent is big enough to hold both Buchanan supporters and Earth Firsters! The trick, says Killian, is to keep to the basic "unifying issue" of corporate power. "It overwhelms everything. It is about the entire culture. It is about the direction of Western civilization. It's about creating a democracy, and we are not going to have a democracy as long as we have corporate rule," he says. "For the first time, I feel that we are really going for the jugular."

The Program on Corporations, Law and Democracy can be reached at P.O. Box 806, Cambridge, Mass., 02140. The National Day of Action to End Corporate Dominance can be reached at HCR 82, Fossil, Ore., 97840 or (408) 425-4422.

CORPORATIONS

Underworld,
U.S.A.

Spurred by Patrick Buchanan's presidential campaign, American reporters and political leaders are suddenly abuzz with the formerly taboo subject of corporate power and its abuse. *Newsweek* ("Corporate Killers"), the *New York Times* ("Corporations Under Fire"), *Business Week* ("The Coming Backlash Against Business"), even Bob Dole, have all weighed in on the tragedy of escalating layoffs.

Yet all the talk of "corporate responsibility," unprecedented as it is, remains numbingly vague. No major political figure or publication has mustered the courage to address the country's current wave of corporate crime and violence. (*Newsweek's* headline writers didn't mean killing people; they meant the elimination of jobs.) But corporate crime and violence inflict far more damage on society than all street crime combined.

Nevertheless, inside-the-Beltway corporate liberals and conservatives alike insist

*Recent talk of
"corporate
responsibility"
has overlooked
America's
corporate
crime
epidemic.*

By Russell Mokhiber

that crime in America is committed primarily by the poor and blacks.

Richard Cohen, a *Washington Post* columnist and a corporate liberal, believes that "young black males commit most of the crimes in Washington, D.C." Charles Krauthammer, a *Post* columnist and a corporate conservative, has written that "crime is generally an occupation of the poor." And James Glassman, a straight-out corporatist and *Post* contributor, writes that the rich "don't commit the violent crimes that require billions to be spent on law enforcement."

These statements can be considered plausible only if we ignore—as Cohen, Krauthammer, Glassman and their colleagues in the mainstream media regularly ignore—the crimes and violence committed by powerful large American corporations and their primarily wealthy non-young-black-male executives.

How much damage these corporations inflict is known only by the criminals, their high-powered lobbyists and their attorneys. (Robert Bennett, one of the nation's premier white-collar crime defense lawyers, has said that "90 percent of what I work on never sees the public light of day—and that should be true of any good white-collar crime defense attorney.")

Every year, the FBI issues its Crime in the United States report, which documents murder, robbery, assault, burglary and other street crimes. The report ignores corporate and white-collar crimes such as pollution, procurement fraud, financial fraud, public corruption and occupational homicide.

But some evidence indicates the magnitude of the problem. The FBI reports burglary and robbery combined cost the nation about \$4 billion in 1995. In contrast, white-collar fraud, generally committed by intelligent people of means—such as doctors, lawyers, accountants and businessmen—alone costs an estimated 50 times as much—\$200 billion a year, according to W. Steve Albrecht, a professor of accountancy at Brigham Young University.

The FBI puts the street homicide rate at about 24,000 a year. But the Labor Department reports that more than twice that number—56,000 Americans—die every year on the job or from occupational diseases such as black lung, brown lung, asbestosis and various occupationally induced cancers.

Even these figures, which scarcely meet with any serious public attention or debate, don't get at the full scale of the problem. Most corporate wrongdoing and violence goes unreported for one compelling reason—unlike all other criminal groups in the United States, major corporations have enough power to define the law under which they live.

The auto industry is a case in point. Today, the federal auto safety law carries no criminal sanctions, thanks to the auto industry lobby. For years, auto safety advocates have sought to add criminal sanctions to the law, and for years,

the auto lobby has blocked their passage.

This might seem to many mainstream observers a harmless legislative perk. But consider that for more than 20 years, the auto industry also defeated efforts to enact a federal law that would require air bags as standard equipment on all U.S. cars.

It wasn't that the industry didn't know how to save lives. General Motors produced more than 11,000 Chevrolets, Buicks, Oldsmobiles and Cadillacs with full front air bags in the early 1970s. Numerous studies predicted what the auto companies and safety experts are now seeing on the road—air bags are saving lives and preventing serious injury.

However, the industry didn't want to live under a life-saving rule of law. So every time safety advocates brought the air bag law up in Congress, the crime lobby defeated it. It wasn't until 1991, after government-procured cars demonstrated the life-saving potential of air bags, that the industry gave in to growing public pressure.

Auto safety expert Byron Bloch, who owns an original production 1973 Chevy Impala with full front air bags, estimates that as many as 140,000 Americans—"almost three Vietnam wars worth of Americans"—have died in auto crashes since the early 1970s because the auto companies' legislative privilege effectively thwarted all efforts to develop and legally mandate the device in American cars.

Yet even if a genuine populist movement were to enact tough laws criminalizing the reckless conduct of corporations, there would still remain the problem of prosecution. And here, too, lurks a central, if unsurprising, obstacle to reining in corporate crime: Unlike most other criminal groups, corporations have enough power to influence prosecutors not to bring criminal charges.

According to former *New York Times* reporter David Burnham, each of the past half-dozen U.S. attorneys general have publicly committed the Justice Department to a war against white-collar crime. But as Burnham reports in his recent book, *Above the Law: Secret Deals, Political Fixes and Other Misadventures of the U.S. Department of Justice*, the Department doesn't walk the talk.

Burnham—who now co-directs the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, which collects data on the performance of the U.S. government—finds that less than one half of 1 percent (250) of the criminal indictments (51,253) brought by the Department in 1994 involved environmental crimes, occupational safety and health crimes, and crimes involving product and consumer safety issues. Burnham doubts whether this record reflects the true level of corporate crime in America.

"In August 1993, the *National Law Journal* did a survey of general counsels of major corporations," Burnham told *Corporate Crime Reporter*. "Sixty-six percent of the counsels said they believed that their companies had violated federal or state environmental laws in the last year. You have tens of thousands of major corporations. You have a substantial number of the general counsels of these companies saying

they are committing crimes. That speaks for itself."

Burnham believes that corporate criminals often get away because of "unacknowledged class biases, outright political deals, poorly drafted laws and incompetent investigators" at the Justice Department. When it comes to prosecuting white-collar crime cases, Burnham argues, "the Justice Department itself could be convicted of fraud."

On-the-job homicides are some of the most heinous crimes corporations could be charged with. Yet corporate violence that results in worker deaths rarely provokes criminal prosecutions, either at the state or federal level. The National Safety Council estimates that since the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHAct) in 1970, 250,000 workers have died on the job.

Many of these deaths stemmed directly from recklessness on the part of corporate employers, but according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), only four people have done time for OSHAct violations.

Each year, OSHA refers only a handful of cases to the Justice Department for criminal prosecution. And Justice Department officials are reluctant to prosecute these cases, knowing that the federal workplace safety law allows for only six months in prison for a first offense.

This is a law enforcement obscenity. Harassing an animal gets you more time than criminal violations of the federal worker safety law. The maximum criminal penalty for harassing a wild burro on federal land is one year in jail, and seven people have been jailed for this crime.

Labor union activists have sought to strengthen the criminal provisions of the health and safety law over the years, but these efforts have been roundly defeated by big business interests in Congress. And the business-driven anti-law enforcement climate in Washington often leaves OSHA pulling its punches in cases of the most egregious corporate conduct.

Take the case of Patrick Hayes. In October 1993, Hayes was smothered to death under 60 tons of corn at a Showell Farms, Inc. chicken-processing facility in De Funiak Springs, Fla. It took rescue workers five and a half hours to recover his body.

OSHA investigator Linda Campbell found six willful violations of the federal worker safety law and recommended a \$530,000 fine against the company. Campbell also told Hayes' parents that she recommended a criminal prosecution of those responsible for Patrick's death.

But Campbell's superiors at OSHA overruled her original determination, reducing the fines to \$30,000 and downgrading the citations from "willful violations" to "serious." Because federal law requires a "willful violation" to prosecute a workplace death, this reversal blocked any possible federal criminal prosecution.

In cases like these, state officials should step into the breach and investigate the workplace death for a possible reckless homicide or manslaughter prosecution. When Ira Reiner was the Los Angeles County district attorney in the

1980s, he investigated every workplace death for a possible criminal prosecution—and took many of the cases to court.

Currently, one such prosecution is pending in Wisconsin. Last year, the district attorney in Jefferson County hit Ladish Malting Co., a wholly owned subsidiary of Cargill, Inc., with reckless homicide charges in connection with the death of Vernon Langholff, an employee who had fallen 100 feet from a fire escape landing that broke apart from a grain elevator. State officials alleged that the unsafe condition of the fire escape had been reported to the company's safety committee three years earlier.

But in most such cases, district attorneys are under heavy pressure from big business interests not to bring such prosecutions. In the Hayes case, Patrick's father, Ron Hayes, approached the Florida state's attorney to look at the possibility of criminally prosecuting the company.

"[The state's attorney] told me and my wife and my attorney that he was scared by the company's attorney," Hayes says. "The company's attorney told the state's attorney that they would make this a political issue if the state tried to prosecute. The state's attorney said that he just did not want to get into a political battle. He was not going to try to help us politically with this case."

Even though corporate offenders regularly tilt the legal system to their advantage, some blatant acts of criminality do slip through the cracks and are prosecuted. Forty-six executives were convicted in the "Operation-Ill-Wind" defense procurement fraud enforcement action in the early 1990s. Thirteen major defense corporations—including Boeing, General Electric, United Technologies and Hughes—were convicted in that operation. In *When the Pentagon Was for Sale* (Scribner, 1995), Andy Pasztor, a *Wall Street Journal* correspondent who covered the Pentagon, tells the inside story of the country's biggest defense scandal. Multibillion-dollar contracts were secretly divvied up according to a "shopping list" devoid of any competition, one of the main conspirators recalled to Pasztor. The conspirators assembled their contracts "just the way you would make one out if you went to the supermarket. When you're in control, you can do anything you want, absolutely anything. ... And we did."

Meanwhile, Exxon, International Paper, United Technologies, Weyerhaeuser, Pillsbury, Ashland Oil, Texaco, Nabisco and Ralston-Purina have all been convicted of environmental crimes in recent years. Currently, federal grand juries in Manhattan, New Orleans, Washington, D.C., Brooklyn and Alexandria, Va., are investigating the tobacco industry for a whole range of wrongdoing, from lying to Congress to deceiving shareholders about the known addictive hazards of smoking. The first indictments are expected soon.

Recidivist corporations steal billions of dollars every year. They are often caught by company whistleblowers and by federal or state officials under the nation's toughest anti-corporate wrongdoing civil law—the federal False Claims Act. The *qui tam* provisions of the False Claims Act permit a private citizen to file suit on behalf of the federal government and collect a portion of the money if the government's action

is successful. In 1994, a group of the nation's largest defense contractors worked the halls of Congress in an effort to weaken this law. (The bill later died in a Senate committee.)

In response, a public-interest group, the Project on Government Oversight, began to research the records of the companies seeking to weaken this popular anti-fraud law. The project studied the criminogenic histories of these companies and found that the companies had been engaged in adjudicated fraudulent activities (some criminal)—many of them three or more times.

The study found that General Electric has engaged in fraudulent activities 16 times since 1990. According to the study, a modified "three strikes and you're out" rule would have disqualified an impressive roster of fraud-tainted losers from receiving government contracts, including Boeing (4), Grumman (5), Honeywell (3), Hughes Aircraft (9), Martin Marietta (5), McDonnell Douglas (4), Northrop (4), Raytheon (4), Rockwell (4), Teledyne (5), Texas Instruments (3) and United Technologies (3).

Meanwhile, corporatist politicians, not beholden to any notion of corporate justice, are shameless in their defense of corporate crime. Last year, a reporter asked Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich about his association with Southwire Co., a major Georgia company convicted of environmental crimes. The reporter pressed Gingrich to explain why he hadn't severed his ties to the family that controls the company and that had dumped more than \$100,000 into Gingrich's various campaigns and projects.

"You are talking about the largest employer in Carroll County [Gingrich's home base], which has over 3,000 people who work for it," Gingrich said. "I hardly think that having been convicted of a violation turns one into a criminal company." No politician could get away with an answer like this after taking contributions from convicted inner-city drug dealers who put to work thousands of their fellow citizens.

Gingrich was also asked last year about House Republican efforts to limit the criminal liability of doctors and other health care providers who rip off the health care system for an estimated \$100 billion a year. "For the moment, I'd rather lock up the murderers, the rapists and the drug dealers," he replied. "Once we start getting some vacant jail space, I'd be glad to look at it." Clearly, Gingrich and the rest of the corporatist Washington crowd fail to grasp a fundamental lesson of effective deterrence: enforce the law against the most powerful members of society first.

Ignore or downplay the crimes of the powerful, and like a fish, respect for legal authority rots—from the head down. Why should street criminals respect legal authority when corporatists like Gingrich give the flashing green light to doctors and hospital executives to plunder the health care system?

Gingrich has said we must "re-establish shame as means of enforcing proper behavior." Who wouldn't agree? But let's start at the top, where the rot takes hold.

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Russell Mokhiber is the editor of *Corporate Crime Reporter*, a legal weekly based in Washington, D.C.



The China syndrome

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ast spring, as foreign investors were bidding anxiously for contracts in mainland China and China was proceeding full-speed ahead with its encouragement of foreign investment-propelled economic growth, the Chinese government suddenly started to behave in an irrationally bellicose manner toward the outside world. Its movement of troops along the Fukien coastline bordering Taiwan and its threatening public utterances about U.S. collusion with those Taiwanese leaders who were seeking independent international status for the island provoked even the coolest, profit-minded investors into running for cover. As some U.S. companies in particular began to adopt a "wait and see" posture toward new business opportunities there, the Clinton administration, lacking a clear China policy, did the same. Ironically, the Taiwan issue exists now only because at the outset, the U.S. govern-

*Why China
views Taiwan
as the lynchpin
of a new
"middle
kingdom."*

By David M. Raddock

ment allowed the defeated Nationalist Chinese to take refuge there as they fled the victorious Communists in 1949.

Pulled back into the time warp of the earlier Cold War in which the notion of two governments in China was conceived, the United States might feel morally or emotionally bound to allow the Taiwan issue to displace President Clinton's otherwise pragmatic and cautious approach toward the new world order. U.S. policy-makers might find this course attractive for obvious reasons—Taiwan's business with the United States is big, and the country stands as a symbol of a U.S.-propelled democracy. But a bigger underlying factor could propel Congress into more precipitate vocalizations concerning political and military action—and Clinton into capitulation to Congress' demands: a lack of sensitivity to China's own uncertain passage into modernity and to the ghosts that haunt China's political culture.

To perceive the issue in Chinese context, it is important to realize that social tensions have been eroding the legitimacy of China's political system since the shedding of Maoism, the violent confrontation at Tiananmen in 1989 and the embrace of modernization. With the death of the behind-the-scenes leader Deng Xiaoping, a leadership succession struggle is apt to persist, and the appeal of the new leadership to a broad-based constituency will remain uncertain. Beijing now seeks to shore up its rule in more "nationalistic" terms that resonate with China's disparate traditional, Communist and modern cultural identities.

Until last summer, the People's Republic of China was from all appearances preoccupied with economic modernization, political stability and attracting foreign investment. But by late summer, it began to reposition some 150,000 troops along the coastline near Taiwan. Many of my Chinese friends in the United States, consulate personnel and refugees from the Tiananmen demonstration connected to rumor networks back home believed war was imminent even then.

To Western eyes, the external provocation for this sudden shift of China's attention was difficult to discern. But China sees things through a different prism. Even before Taiwan's president came to the United States, a flurry of congressional subcommittee hearings on Taiwan's international status and future aroused old anxieties in China. The Clinton administration, typically moved to take the domestic political temperature, equivocated over issuing a visa for Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui's unofficial visit to the United States despite mainland government protests. (At the time of the Shanghai Communiqué in 1972, it supposedly had been agreed that no high officials from Taiwan would be admitted to the United States.) In this context, Chinese leaders viewed the Taiwan leader's reunion speech at Cornell University—and a subsequent U.S. press conference—

as boldly defiant acts. And to make matters worse, Newt Gingrich had called a congressional fete for the superannuated Mme. Chiang Kai-shek, who was trotted out from her home in Great Neck, Long Island to breakfast on Capitol Hill. All these events surrounding President Lee's visit, on which he supposedly spent a fortune in public relations, created an atmosphere that the mainland saw as threatening—and even as a conspiratorial “ganging up” on it for not being sufficiently *in tune with* the so-called free world.

An earlier crisis in the Taiwan Strait affords a useful study in how the internal dynamics of Chinese society interact with aggressive posturing toward Taiwan. After the Chinese Red Army triumphantly swept the mainland in 1949, the U.S. Seventh Fleet thwarted the Communists' hope of recovering Taiwan from Chiang Kai-shek and vanquishing the Nationalist government-in-exile. Since then, the Chinese Communists consistently have held the recovery of the island to be, in Mao Zedong's words, of “paramount importance.” The routine shelling of the small Taiwan Strait islands of Quemoy and Matsu in the late 1950s unnerved Taiwan for a time and served as grist in the 1960 presidential debates between Kennedy and Nixon, who considered how far the United States would go militarily to protect the Nationalists. Then, as now, China was going through disorienting internal turmoil: Mao's military-like, labor-intensive mobilization of the “Great Leap Forward” was a socially disruptive attempt to carry China toward the apocalypse. Mao's leadership authority might have come into question. China was entering an ideological dispute with Moscow and struggling to define a different set of national values for itself. Domestically driven energies seemed to be directed outward to the goal of recovering Taiwan.

In this context, the present drama makes more sense. Chinese society is in a state of flux and confused about its identity. The United States reaffirmed the principle of one China (this time the People's Republic) in the Shanghai Communiqué but “agreed to disagree” over China's right to use force to recover Taiwan. Even as the Chinese proceeded in negotiations with the British for the return of Hong Kong, the Taiwan issue has remained the cornerstone of Chinese foreign policy. And the smooth recovery of Hong Kong, as Chinese policy-makers view it, will only be a prelude to the full territorial reintegration of mainland China and its restoration to pre-19th century “middle kingdom” status, when China still believed it was the center of the civilized world. In those days, the Chinese emperor deigned to receive emissaries bearing tribute from abroad at his pleasure and would never have dreamed of a reverse set of circumstances.

Now, more than in the 1950s, the independent existence of Taiwan stands like a thorn in China's side: an example of economic development, to be sure, and, just as nettlesome, of the emergence of representative democracy and civil rights from a tradition of unmitigated dictatorship. Ordinary Chinese citizens are angry at their government for wasting decades in social experimentation as Taiwan was developing economically. As Taiwan's citizens became freer,



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their Chinese counterparts lived in poor conditions, rehearsing ideological incantations for fear of being sent to labor camps for saying the wrong thing.

Already on a course of implementing its ninth Five-Year Plan (approved by the Party Central Committee and soon to be ratified by the National People's Congress) to make it into an industrial giant in the next 15 years, China might like to recover its pre-19th century perception of itself as the “middle kingdom”—the center of an orderly universe. The Chinese Communist government is determined to enter the next millennium as an economic superpower and believes that the rest of the world is unremittently hostile to the specter of a resurgent, unified China. As China struggles to catch up at an impressive but perilous growth rate of about 13 percent yearly—especially in competition with a Taiwan that benefited in the early years from U.S. aid—it feels a sense of urgency to reintegrate the province and, more important, to *prevent it from going its own way*.

Taiwan's continued existence and its recent, heightened legitimacy challenge the People's Republic of China to justify its own legitimacy. The island republic, once a Disneyland of traditional Chinese values whose national identity was defined by secret police, now has what China *wants*—a high per capita income, an educated and politically aware population, and a sense of national purpose. Americans and their elite Chinese guests are no longer dancing at the U.S. Army Officer's Club to the tune of “Taiwan by the Sea, Cha-cha-cha,” as they were in the dictatorial client state of

the 1960s and 1970s. Taiwan is developing a new identity. The Chinese government can call Taiwan a bourgeois democracy, but mainland China no longer has the unifying ideology or the strong sense of integrative values of its Maoist period. In the face of Taiwan's first-ever free elections for a representative government, mainland China has become much like the hollow dictatorship from which the new Taiwan evolved: It seeks to intimidate Chinese voters from a course of national solidarity, representative government and independence.

Indeed, fueling the latest round of hostility to Taiwan is a sense among the sitting "dictatorship of the proletariat" that it is losing its grip. China's national identity has been eroding steadily into the "loose sand" Deng Xiaoping saw in the Chinese peasantry. The central regime is undergoing its succession crisis, Tibet is besieged by human rights activists, minorities on China's periphery are restive and local identities are re-emerging. (One old Shanghaiese lady I met in the street even remarked to me that the sainted Premier Zhou Enlai's wartime residence in Shanghai, now a museum, had more relevance to Beijing than to Shanghai.) Regional strongholds have been reasserting their prerogatives faster than the center has mandated. The economy remains mixed between state planning and stagnant "parastatals" on the one hand and an expanding private sector, fueled by foreign investment, on the other. Financial management and distribution of wealth remain unbalanced, and local wildcat strikes have even erupted at foreign manufacturing facilities.

Denied what it feels is proper international respect as it struggles to hold itself together and move forward, China resorts to *nationalism*—what its leaders call "5,000 years of Chinese history and civilization"—as its rallying point. Jingoistic military maneuvers against Taiwan are meant to jump-start a sense of internal unity. Such superficial nationalistic appeals might resonate in the short term with the traditional xenophobic paranoia of the Chinese people. Both the leaders and the led in varying degrees share in the sense that they are being held back by a conspiracy of developed countries on the decline.

But post-Mao China lacks an enduring set of integrative values that would help to rebuild the legitimacy of the Chinese government in the face of the centripetal forces pulling it inward and the external challenges to join the international mainstream. The new leadership must find a nationality that derives from the practical needs of the long transition involving the coexistence of market capitalism and Chinese-style socialism. Drawing from its own high and mass culture traditions, China must create a new national consciousness that builds on popular traditions of social responsibility and the traditional right of individuals in China to remonstrate with authority. In a rather contrived, top-down fashion, the government has tried to formulate for people an ersatz national identity, based on current needs and comprised of recalled traditional values. For example, to inculcate a social conscience and orderly norms of behavior, education authorities have been disseminating new lower-middle-

school primers on selected Confucian values with titles like "Chairman Mao's Favorite Stories from Confucius."

The threat of aggression at this juncture against Taiwan (although justified as an "internal" matter) betrays a fundamental lack of self-esteem on the part of China. The country's leaders are still defensive about China's integrity as a nation-state, and about its place in the family of nations. As a result, they compensate by boasting, trying to convince themselves and other of their greatness. China's political and intellectual elites think the country will one day become the central culture in a boundary-free world, recalling perhaps the country's golden age (the Confucian "Great Harmony" under the heavens, or *Datong*). Until such a time, however, it must homogenize its national character in order to prove itself to itself. On a visit to Shanghai last year, I spoke with one high school student who told me that she hopes that in the next millennium all countries will be as one, with China showing the way. If China perceives that the international community slights and rejects its pursuit of this vision, it will play the bully. China cannot bear to lose face now. For the United States and its allies, caution, rather than brinksmanship diplomacy, is the soundest way to deal with a mature nation in a crisis, acting like a child. ◀

David M. Raddock is president of DMR Associates, a New York-based public relations firm, and the author of *Political Behavior of Adolescents in China* (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 1977). He has written numerous articles on China and two books on international political risk analysis.

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Taiwan's straits

***Why
the island
republic's
elections are
a nuisance for
Washington
as well as
Beijing.***

By Dave Lindorff
TAIPEI

It's the little things that tell you how different Taiwan is—not just from mainland China but from an authoritarian Chinese political culture that goes back thousands of years. As Taiwan prepared for its first-ever presidential election last month, evidence of that difference was everywhere: the little knot of supporters of opposition presidential candidate Peng Ming-min handing out campaign literature to office workers near the railway station; the taxi driver loudly cursing incumbent President Lee Teng-hui near the campaign headquarters of the party that has ruled the country since 1949; the banner for the opposition Democratic Progressive Party, advocate of an independent Taiwan, unfurled in front of the gate of the national parliament building.

It's the very banality of

these manifestations of political opposition that is so stunning. Nine years after martial law was lifted on this island of 21 million just 120 miles off the coast of southern China, Taiwan represents something never before seen in China: a vibrant, functioning democratic society.

As *In These Times* went to press, Lee was almost certain to win the March 23 presidential vote—though perhaps not by a majority—thanks to his campaign war chest, his popularity and popular anger at China's vilification of him. Nonetheless, he was seeing an energetic challenge to his leadership in a campaign that took place amid deepening international tensions over Taiwan.

Two weeks before the vote, China began conducting ballistic missile tests near the northern and southern coasts of Taiwan. Beijing is worried that Taiwan—which it claims as a renegade province—wants to disavow reunification with the mainland and declare its independence. The Chinese government blames Lee for the crisis, saying he secretly hopes to move toward Taiwanese indepen-

dence after the vote.

Despite its remarkable transition to democracy, Taiwan is increasingly a nuisance for the United States. Though it is America's eighth-largest trading partner, its significance pales beside the growing economic power—and marketplace lure—of the People's Republic of China, population 1.3 billion. And China has made the stakes clear: If Washington officially recognizes Taiwan, the mainland is off limits, politically and economically.

Complicating things further for many progressive Americans—who might otherwise be expected to stand up for freedom and self-determination—is the legacy of Chiang Kai-shek. The former right-wing dictator, who ruled the people of this island with the same kind of ruthlessness that the communists have used on the mainland, is long gone, and his party, the Kuomintang, has been taken over lock, stock and barrel by native Taiwanese. (Indeed, President Lee is himself a native.) Yet there remains a lingering tendency to think of Taiwan as simply another dictatorship.

The 1972 deal between President Richard Nixon and Communist Chinese leaders Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai—in which Washington traded recognition of Taiwan for recognition of China—posed few moral problems for most Americans. Chiang's mainland army was no more than an occupation force; indeed, it had massacred more than 20,000 native Taiwanese in an orgy of repression on a single day in 1947. And even in the early '80s, dissidents on the little island faced as much persecution as they did on the mainland.

Nothing could be further from the truth today, however. While nervous Chinese leaders are rounding up even third-

string dissidents, Taiwan has full democratic freedom, no political prisoners and, now, an elected president. The Taiwanese people have struggled hard for their democratic rights and are proud of them. It's this confidence about their own sovereignty that gives them the strength to face up to Chinese threats of invasion or rocket attack. "We can't stop the communist bandits from attacking us," says Wang Chen-tung, a noodle shop owner in Taipei. "That's something we just have to live with. But they could never conquer this little island."

Yet what worries Beijing is not just the threat of Taiwanese independence. China's leaders must also take into account the impact that Taiwanese democracy is likely to have on political developments inside their own country.

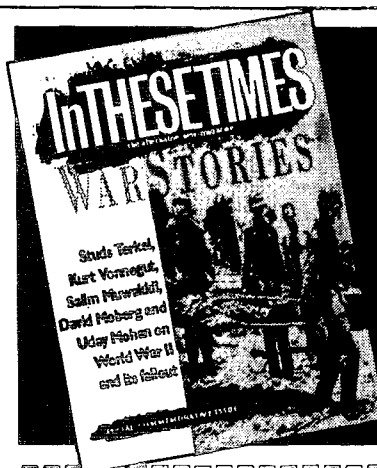
One Chinese dissident—a colleague of imprisoned democracy advocate Wei Jingsheng—puts it this way: "Taiwan is an extremely important model for the future of Chinese society. The party leaders in Beijing know this, and it's this—not concern for Taiwanese independence—that has them upset. If Chinese people on Taiwan can have democracy and freedom and economic development all at the same time, then the party's argument against democracy and freedom in China has been destroyed."

Taiwan's embrace of the democratic ideal is all the more powerful because of the bankruptcy of communist ideology on the mainland. China's central regime now maintains power through a nearly 1 million-member paramilitary police organization, the People's Armed Police, as well as an enormous standing army and an omnipresent secret police force, the Public Security Bureau.

Where Taiwan has created a nation of middle-class democrats eager to take their place in the community of nations, China has worked itself into a corner. Communist leaders have attempted to appease the populace with economic growth while keeping all the power to themselves—and this, in turn, has sparked a nationwide binge of corruption that now threatens further development. At the same time, the scrapping of socialist theory has produced two kinds of growing income disparity: one between rich and poor and the other between the thriving coastal regions and the suffering hinterlands.

It's an explosive situation, and the existence of an alternative, a scant 100 miles offshore, is fuel for the inevitable fire.

President Clinton's "constructive engagement" policy toward China has been a disaster economically, politically, militarily and morally. Now, with Beijing openly threatening war against Taiwan, the choice between the two countries should be clear. The problem is, of course, that China can buy a lot more Boeing jets and AT&T switching systems than can Taiwan, so the American business community is pressuring Clinton to stay the course. Yet when the Chinese people finally rise up and toss out their ossified rulers in Beijing and turn to a new model of government, that cold calculus may return to haunt Washington policy-makers and Wall Street business leaders alike.



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L A B O R

State of the unions

Richard Trumka, the former president of the United Mine Workers, has long made the case for a more active labor movement. He's argued that unions should organize more aggressively, develop a more autonomous political voice and confront employers with innovative pressure campaigns.

Richard Trumka discusses the AFL-CIO's aggressive new strategies.

By David Moberg
BAL HARBOUR, FLA.

Now, the 46-year-old Trumka is in a stronger position to implement those ideas. Last October, he was elected secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO on the same ticket that made John Sweeney president and Linda Chavez-Thompson executive vice president.

At the AFL-CIO's winter meeting at Bal Harbour in February, the AFL-CIO Executive Council officially approved assertive new strategies in organizing and electoral politics. In a novel departure, the labor federation will spend \$35 million this year to educate union members about political and

economic issues. Although most of the money—to be raised from a proposed special assessment as well as from voluntary union contributions—will go into television and radio advertising, about \$10 million will be committed to flesh-and-blood organizing. In 75 key congressional districts, specially trained organizers will develop a network of union members who pledge to devote at least 30 hours to politics this year and who will continue to pressure officials after their election. Although Democrats are the most likely beneficiaries, new AFL-CIO Political Director Steve Rosenthal says the federation intends to focus on issues, not candidates or parties, and hopes to build a strong grass-roots political organization.

Under the guidance of Richard Bensinger—who moved from the highly successful Organizing Institute, a quasi-autonomous training organization, to head a new AFL-CIO organizing department—the federation will pursue larger, more innovative organizing campaigns by providing technical assistance and seed money, to be matched 4-to-1 by participating unions. The

Organizing Institute will step up training of new organizers, and the federation is now recruiting 1,000 young workers and students for a "Union Summer" campaign to support organizing and anti-corporate actions.

With such changes under way, *In These Times* sought Trumka's perspective. The following are edited excerpts of an interview conducted at the Bal Harbour gathering.

What can unions do to conduct successful organizing campaigns other than pumping more resources and organizers into them?

There are a lot of things that you really need to be totally successful. First, we have to create a culture in which everybody is geared toward organizing. It takes a while to change that culture from where we are now. Obviously, the laws are an impediment to organizing, but we can't wait for labor law to change. We have to do it for ourselves. I think we made a tremendous step at this meeting to make organizing our top priority.

Should unions focus on low-wage workers?

I think there should be a focus on low-wage workers, but not exclusively. Look at it from a humanitarian point of view. Who needs a raise more than people now working at the minimum wage? Who can benefit from collective bargaining more than they can?

I think there will be great opportunities with white-collar workers. Look at these downsizings that go on. Middle-level managers get whacked. Who speaks for them? Who defends them? Nobody.

What did you think of Clinton's recent State of the Union address, in which he declared that the era of big government is over? Is this the line you want to hear from your candidate for president?

I think the emphasis should be on the effectiveness of government. The Republicans have tried to make too much out of the size of government. Were there inefficiencies? Of course. You can find inefficiencies in any organization. But look at some of the successes. Social Security has lifted more people out of poverty than any other program out there. The Republicans say we're overregulated. Look at the Mine Safety and Health Administration. I was in the mines before there was the federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969, and I can tell you that the mines are a whole lot safer now. Medicaid, Medicare—all those programs have done infinite good. The hypocrisy everybody should take to task is that the Republicans say they want to get rid of big government, and it's an excuse for them playing reverse Robin Hood on us, taking from the poor and the workers and giving to the rich.

Why do you think that realization has not effectively sunk into the majority of Americans, including your members?

Workers went through several different cycles on how to deal with wage stagnation. First, their spouses went into the job market. Then they looked for a second job, working longer hours. When that didn't work, they tried other things: They had fewer children, and they went into debt. With the kids moving back into the house, after they tried all those strategies and their wages still stagnated, they look at their paycheck, and they say, 'The only way I can get a raise is to cut some of these taxes out.' But they don't realize that if, for example, you've got a kid going to college, tax cuts could actually cost you money. The government gives you a tax cut of \$100, but it gives less money to the university, and the university charges \$400 more to go to school, so at the end of the year you're minus \$300.

Has Clinton given an adequate response to your demand that America get a raise?

He's clearly behind Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid.

But he's talking about cutting back the rate of growth for these programs, too.

If he hadn't stood in the way, the Republicans would have slashed and burned Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid and turned them into tax breaks for the rich. He's also squarely in favor of the minimum wage. He's squarely in favor of bringing collective bargaining to more people.

What's the evidence of that? He has not spoken out that clearly that workers ought to join unions.

Well, there's room for improvement there. There surely is, there's no question about that. But let's look at appointments to the National Labor Relations Board. As opposed to the former chairman of the right-to-work committee [Donald Dotson], who was appointed by Reagan, the appointments have been a whole lot better.

I wonder if it's adequate to ask your members to vote for Clinton because he's better than the Republicans.

That's not going to energize people.

But will they believe you if you say Clinton is the workers' friend, even though his record includes promoting NAFTA and backsliding on other issues?

I think two questions are going to have to be answered, because they are foremost in the minds of 95 percent of workers out there. One, what are you going to do to increase my standard of living? Two, what are you going to do to increase my level of job security? The people who have a good job live in absolute fear of losing that job. Those who have lost that job have seen their standard of living plummet.

The Democratic Party is going to have to put together a platform that answers those questions for most Americans, and then they better have the party discipline afterward to get them passed.

How will you help to make sure that they do that?

I think we're going to be integrally involved in drafting that platform.

What do you see as the model of your relationship with the Democratic Party?

We should be independent. We should be issue-oriented and support candidates who support workers' rights, needs and wants. I don't care what party they come from—we should be willing to support those candidates and not willing to support candidates who don't support the needs of workers. If neither party offers such a candidate, then we should be willing—and we will be [ready]—to train candidates to run in the primaries.

But you also want to have a stronger voice in writing the platform and directing campaigns. So you want more power in the Democratic Party?

We actually want to have more say in the debate and the agenda. We want to have workers control the debate, to have workers' issues be the centerpiece of any election, not some wedge issue off the wall.

What is your reaction to Secretary of Labor Robert Reich's proposal for some kind of tax break for corporations that behave nicely?

I probably would use carrot and stick. I think it's sad you have to give a corporation a reward for doing what's right all along.

What changes do you see coming in labor's international affairs?

With an economy that everybody describes as globalized, not to deal with corporations in other parts of the world is foolish. We're going to head toward real cross-border solidarity, worker-to-worker solidarity.

We're trying to track and affect corporations across borders. When Exxon went into Colombia, we went to Colombia and actually negotiated for the Colombian mine workers. The Australian miners actually struck Lord Hanson [of Hanson PLC, a British conglomerate] on our behalf when we were striking Peabody [which is owned by Hanson]. The South African miners struck on our behalf.

What has surprised you after several months on the job?

A good surprise is our potential to move society forward, how much of a leader the labor movement could and should be, in and outside the Beltway, and how important grassroots things are, how much effect they can have. ◀

Rough road ahead

*The UAW
looks to
rebuild
its strength
for a new
bargaining
season.*

By John Lippert

In the post-Caterpillar world, which United Auto Workers (UAW) leaders will consider when they gather in Detroit April 1, the fight against outsourcing has become more than a slogan, more than one among several bargaining possibilities. It's become a crusade, a fight for survival.

Last fall, Caterpillar handed the UAW its most crushing defeat in decades. Buoyed by fat profits and uninterrupted assembly lines, the construction equipment manufacturer forced the UAW to abandon a 17-month strike, and to return to work with concessions that four out of five Caterpillar workers had rejected.

UAW leaders reject the notion that they lost to Caterpillar because new computer-controlled equipment had "deskilled" production lines, or because one-third of UAW members crossed picket lines. Rather,

they argue, the union sowed the seeds of its current troubles when it surrendered key tactical advantages during a period of labor-management detente in the late 1980s. By allowing Caterpillar to shift critical component jobs to non-union Southern factories, to overseas factories and to an Illinois factory where workers belong to a different union, the International Association of Machinists, the UAW undermined the company-wide solidarity needed to wage an effective strike.

Stung by the Caterpillar defeat, and determined not to repeat past mistakes, UAW officials have adopted a harsher, more uncompromising tone in their relations with Detroit automakers. The union is showing more determination to protect the component jobs it has now, to undertake more aggressive organizing campaigns and to speed efforts to merge with other unions.

Representatives from the Machinists and the Steelworkers, for example, will monitor contract talks in Detroit, though it's too early to predict how the planned merger between the three unions, scheduled for completion in the year 2000, will affect specific contracts. And in an effort to promote a unified strategy among various unions working in the auto industry, UAW leaders are attending strategy sessions of the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE). Just a few years ago, in a move that outraged UAW leaders, the IUE made considerable concessions to General Motors, including a three-tier wage scale.

The UAW's March 5 strike at two GM brake plants in Ohio—which soon mushroomed into the largest American strike of the 1990s—typifies the new tensions rumbling through Detroit. The union called the strike in response to GM's decision to buy technology for a new generation of anti-lock brakes from a German-owned supplier, Robert Bosch GmbH, instead of investing in the technology itself. If carried out, this decision would eliminate 128 UAW jobs the company had promised to create in Dayton. The two sides also clashed over another 200 jobs building brake calipers, disc brakes and parking brakes.

Given the sacrifices workers have been making in GM's Dayton plants, says Joe Hasenjager, president of UAW Local 696, the company's move to outsource work is "a slap in the face." GM had promised the new jobs in return for prior UAW concessions, including making production workers responsible for more non-production tasks, like driving fork-lift trucks. Also, Hasenjager argues, the plant's largely 50-something workforce is averaging 16 hours of overtime per week.

Brakes are a core part of a car or truck, UAW officials argue, not a cheap accessory like an ashtray. The union wants GM to maintain its leadership in brake technology, and it questions the economic motive for the outsourcing.

Even GM admits that UAW workers can produce the brakes as cheaply as Bosch workers. Indeed, many GM officials are concluding that a high level of in-house parts-making is a strategic advantage, says Dan Luria, a senior researcher at the Industrial Technology Institute, an Ann Arbor clearinghouse for advanced manufacturing techniques. The plant in Dayton, for example, makes money for GM by making brakes for Chrysler and some Japanese automakers.

Union leaders have highlighted ways that investment decisions benefiting the company's bottom line can also lend workers job security and wage growth. In the Dayton strike, the UAW is trying to cement its right to bargain over specific investment decisions. In other factory-level strikes in recent years, by contrast, the UAW has allowed GM to juggle various kinds of work as long as overall staffing targets were met.

UAW officials are wary, however, of asking for too much. Officials on both sides expect a contract this fall with some lump sum bonuses instead of base wage increases in each year. Given the UAW's modest approach to wages, and the double-digit annual productivity increases that it's helping GM achieve in most plants, labor costs as a percentage of total costs are declining.

For now, the UAW's carefully controlled strategy of plant-level strikes is popular with rank-and-file workers, who are genuinely scared that their sons and daughters won't be able to find high-wage jobs. Dozens of factories, in fact, are seeking approval to strike. And for now, at least, the UAW has lots of power. The walkout by just 3,200 Dayton workers shut down two dozen GM assembly lines in three countries.

GM, for its part, has allowed the strike to drag on precisely to make the UAW think twice about striking. It has challenged unemployment claims of workers who were laid off because of the strike. The effort has had mixed success: State officials in Louisiana and Oklahoma approved the claims despite GM's objections. Officials in Texas have not, causing some GM workers to miss their first paycheck in decades.

And although the strike has cost GM up to \$300 million a week in net income, the company is well-positioned to ride out the storm. As the strike began, GM was sitting on a \$12 billion cash horde, and had fat inventories of unsold cars to cushion the strike's impact. Also, it could boost overtime afterwards to make up for some lost sales of hot-selling trucks.

The strikers, too, have considerable latitude for movement. Unlike their counterparts at Caterpillar, they need not fear being replaced, at least for now. As one GM executive, who asked for anonymity, explains: "Given the quality and the complexity we need, [replacement] would work for about one or two jobs an hour. Beyond that, it wouldn't work." Most GM plants build 60 vehicles an hour or more.

Still, the executive adds, the UAW will have to choose between high wages and its current number of jobs. "They can't have both," he says—especially in parts plants. Downward pressure on UAW wage scales will continue as long as

most U.S. parts factories remain non-union. Bosch, for example, despite its cordial relations with German unions at home, has maintained a harsh anti-union policy in the United States. While UAW employees in Big Three plants make nearly \$19 an hour, Bosch pays workers at some parts plants \$8.50 an hour. In 1991, the UAW won an organizing drive at a Bosch factory in the Detroit suburb of Belleville. The company delayed National Labor Relations Board certification of the election into 1995, when the UAW called a six-month strike. The union won the strike, but in the meantime Bosch moved 66 of 110 jobs to a non-union plant in Indiana.

The UAW's future, then, lies not just in contract negotiations at Big Three automakers, but in developing counterstrategies to the kind of determined opposition it encounters at companies like Bosch. A high-level union task force is now completing a report on how to accelerate organizing efforts. One strategy under consideration is to target suppliers such as Bosch or Dana Corp. in several locations simultaneously, instead of at one plant at a time. Such efforts would have the feel of an organizing "crusade," which Walter Reuther wanted from the AFL-CIO in the 1950s and 1960s and didn't get. It would allow hefty, yet focused, expenditures of organizing, legal and public relations resources.

Pressure from non-union competitors will require tough choices during contract talks this fall. As an opening gambit, the UAW may seek a contract at Chrysler that sets a floor on employment and gives the union a greater voice in investment decisions. Union negotiators whetted their appetite with a recent success in factory-level bargaining at the company's Jefferson North Jeep plant in Detroit. A contract signed March 14 gives the UAW jobs that had previously been non-union, including some skilled trades work, and some repair, maintenance and landscaping jobs, says Walt Harris, shop chairman of UAW Local 7.

In talks this fall, the UAW will seek some contract gains, such as cost-of-living adjustments on pensions and additional steps toward a shorter workweek. It will, in turn, offer to help the companies cut health costs by accelerating efforts to pressure doctors, hospitals and other providers into cutting waste.

When contracts expire in mid-September in Detroit, then, the big question will likely be whether GM will accept a pattern contract established at Chrysler. Compromises are not impossible. For example, the GM executive says, the UAW may accept flatter wages at parts plants if newly hired parts workers could eventually transfer to assembly, powertrain or stamping plants, thus qualifying for full wages.

The UAW has always said no to such compromises before. The 1990s, however, are a tough time for unions. This is a lesson, as Caterpillar demonstrated, that applies even to America's flagship industrial union.

John Lippert is the *Detroit Free Press* labor writer and a member of Newspaper Guild Local 22.

P O L I T I C S

Golden opportunity

The hotly debated and racially divisive California Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI), a ballot measure to ban affirmative action programs, met California's ballot-filing deadline in February with just enough signatures to qualify. If it passes in November, the measure is likely to have a significant effect on affirmative action programs across the country. Petitions identical to California's are circulating in Florida, Colorado, Oregon, Washington and Illinois, and have been introduced as bills in 17 other states as well as at the federal level.

How a united, inclusive opposition can roll back California's anti-affirmative action initiative.

By Nina Schuyler

Backing the measure is the Republican Party, which sees CCRI as a way to divide the Democrats, draw disenchanted Perot supporters to the polls in 1996 and perhaps swing California to the GOP in the presidential election. In a revealing column from 1994, current presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan

tagged CCRI as the "populist issue to reunite [the Reagan] coalition and slice Bill Clinton's new coalition asunder."

While some important early signs suggest that the Republican strategy is not working, most political observers say the opposition campaign has a lot of work to do if it hopes to defeat the measure. In particular, the anti-CCRI forces have to avoid the pitfalls that plagued the 1994 anti-Proposition 187 campaign, which failed to defeat a measure that cut off state benefits to immigrants. And that means, in turn, that the opposition forces on the left must find a more inclusive message than one informed largely by identity politics.

"The opposition needs to get out the message that, on balance, affirmative action has been good for the California economy and for eliminating historical injustices that caused whole segments of the population to be excluded from parts of the labor market and the educational system," says Jerome Karabel, professor of sociology at the Uni-

versity of California at Berkeley. "It doesn't mean you have to establish that affirmative action programs have been perfect or that there haven't been abuses. But basically the question needs to be posed: 'Are we better off in terms of equal opportunity now than in 1965, when these programs were started?'"

In some respects, the anti-CCRI movement has important advantages over 1994's anti-Prop 187 effort. For one thing, the anti-CCRI forces have started organizing much earlier than their anti-Prop 187 counterparts did. They still have time to take advantage of the voters' shifting and ambiguous opinions about affirmative action.

"It's still very much an open question whether it [CCRI] will succeed," says Karabel. While early polls showed strong support for CCRI—a 78 percent approval rating in April 1995—that backing is weakening significantly. A February 21 survey conducted by the Field Poll found that since December, among the voters who knew about the measure, support for CCRI fell from 29 to 27 percent and opposition rose from 20 to 24 percent.

And while many Republicans had hoped the initiative would divide Democrats, the issue also might create a split in the GOP. For instance, even though Robert Dole, the presumptive GOP presidential nominee, has co-sponsored a bill to end federal race and gender preferences, Republican congressional support for it is wavering. Even House Speaker Newt Gingrich has acknowledged the sensitive nature of the issue for Republicans. "I don't think we should use affirmative action as a wedge issue," he said. Gingrich has proposed tying any anti-affirmative action effort to an "empowerment agenda" aimed at helping poor and minorities communities. And seven Republican Governors, includ-

This article was made possible by a grant from the Funding Exchange, which is financing a series of articles on grass-roots efforts to counter the conservative political agenda.

ing Christine Todd Whitman of New Jersey and William Weld of Massachusetts, have publicly stated that eliminating affirmative action programs is a bad idea.

Nonetheless, anti-initiative forces may not be in a position to take advantage of this apparent break in GOP unity. So far, the campaign has failed to embrace a message likely to attract a broad cross-section of voters. The largest and best-funded opposition group—The Campaign for Women's Rights and Civil Rights, headed up by the Feminist Majority—has directed its message almost exclusively at women voters. Organizers say they can't win without strong support from white women. Although California's population is 50 percent white, the electorate is 83 percent white, and half of that group is women. Hence, their widely used campaign slogan: "Women Won't Go Back!"

The group's campaign literature emphasizes the benefits women have gained under affirmative action and highlights a little-publicized clause in the initiative that would essentially make it easier for state government and private industry to bar women from certain jobs—such as police and fire protection—and allow schools to eliminate girls' programs. Currently, women in California receive more protection against discrimination than the federal Constitution provides. A 1971 California Supreme Court decision voided a law that prohibited women from working as bartenders and made it illegal to discriminate against women unless it was necessary to achieve a compelling state purpose—a very high standard and rarely met. CCRI's Clause C would reduce that standard to allow discrimination against women when "reasonably necessary to the normal operations of public employment, public education and public contracting."

"This is an out-and-out attack on women's rights in California," says Patricia Ewing, recently hired campaign manager for the Campaign for Women's Rights and Civil Rights. "Women currently have primary status in this state. CCRI moves them to second-class citizen status."

But some sympathizers of the anti-CCRI campaign say that if this is the only message that is publicly communicated, the campaign's strategy could backfire—primarily because it concedes too much to the pro-CCRI forces. According to some political observers, the initiative's opponents need to understand three fundamental dichotomies in order to formulate a successful strategy:

- **General principles vs. special interests.** The pro-CCRI campaign has adopted a message based on general principles—that eliminating affirmative action programs will provide a level playing field for job-seekers and would-be college students. The Campaign for Women's Rights and Civil Rights, however, has created a message that appeals to the vested interests of one voting bloc. The campaign's emphasis on gender excludes the 40 percent of the California electorate who are white men—and risks provoking a backlash, even if only a quiet one. Moreover, the campaign's women-focused message may not even reach its target audience: polling data show that white women perceive affirmative action as a minority issue rather than a concern of women.

- **The public good vs. group interest.** By using arguments

about fairness and colorblindness, the pro-CCRI forces also seem to have effectively portrayed the initiative as something that would serve the public good. They've been helped by the anti-initiative campaign, which has largely avoided public-good arguments in favor of gender issues. And that's too bad, because a compelling case can be made that affirmative action helps not just minorities but the entire state. Not only have affirmative action programs helped break down barriers to include those who have been excluded in the past, they have spurred the California economy and made large segments of the population productive.

- **Stories and anecdotes vs. studies and statistics.** Voters are more likely to be convinced by stories and compelling narratives than by dry studies and statistics. CCRI backers know this all too well. One of the initiative's drafters, Tom Wood, a philosophy Ph.D., tirelessly circulates an anecdote about him being passed up for a plum university appointment because he was a white man. A recent *NBC Dateline* report revealed that Wood's anecdote had no foundation in fact—he simply lacked the qualifications to be hired.

Meanwhile, the opposition campaign literature is filled with long factoids and graphs about the benefits of affirmative action for women and minorities—even though it has equally compelling anecdotes at its disposal that have the added advantage of being true. For a more effective approach, anti-initiative organizers might turn to a recent *New York Times Magazine* article by Nicholas Lemann. Lemann's article opened with a close examination of the effects of affirmative action on the lives of two men: Dr. Patrick Chavis, who in 1973, along with four other African-Americans, was admitted under a special minorities program to the University of California Medical School at Davis, and Dr. Allan Bakke, a white man who pursued the celebrated Supreme Court challenge to Davis' racial preference policies, claiming he had unfairly been denied admission because of them. Lemann discovered that Bakke's courtroom claim that he was more qualified to be a physician than Chavis has not panned out in real life. Chavis, now an obstetrician-gynecologist, has built up a large practice in Compton, Calif., a predominantly black and Hispanic city. Bakke, an anesthesiologist in Minnesota, has no private practice and works on an interim basis at a local hospital.

In the recent Prop 187 debate, opposition forces positioned themselves on the wrong side of all three of these equations and lost as a result. Prop 187 passed with 59 percent of the vote, including the support of 40 to 50 percent of black and Asian voters and 20 to 25 percent of Latino voters.

Journalist Michael Tomasky, author of a forthcoming book, *Left for Dead*, argues the anti-Prop 187 forces failed to present a compelling message to the voters. More specifically, the opposition forces splintered into two different camps. The more moderate wing acknowledged that illegal immigration was a problem but offered no solutions, while grass-roots opponents of the measure branded any discussion of an immi-

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BLACK AMERICA

Ganging up

W

Gangs and politics are a controversial but inescapable mix in African-American communities.

By Salim Muwakkil
CHICAGO

Wallace "Gator" Bradley is an ex-inmate and former "enforcer" for the Gangster Disciples, Chicago's largest street gang. He is also an emerging figure in Chicago politics. Most recently, Bradley endorsed Danny K. Davis, one of the 10 candidates running in the Illinois primary election to succeed U.S. Rep. Cardiss Collins, who is vacating the state's 7th Congressional District seat. Davis won the primary election on March 19 by a wide margin.

Some of Davis' opponents—and many media commentators—demanded he repudiate Bradley but he refused. Davis' victory, despite his opposition's reckless charges that he was tainted by "gang ties," helps illuminate an issue of growing concern for the African-American community. Alliances between

"respectable" politicians and groups with ties to street gangs will increase as the African-American community continues to suffer at the hands of America's burgeoning "corrections-industrial complex." The U.S. Justice Department has decisively thrown its weight behind the punitive response to urban crime with its "anti-violent crime initiative" launched two years ago by Attorney General Janet Reno. Reno's program adds a steady inflow of federal inmates alongside the swelling ranks of state prisoners locked up indefinitely under "three strikes" laws.

Already, according to Jerome G. Miller's forthcoming book, *Search And Destroy* (Cambridge University Press), an African-American male between the ages of 18 and 35 has an 80 percent chance of encountering the criminal justice system. More black youths than ever are being exposed to jail culture. Thus, the black community must increasingly look to leadership and activism from those who survive that culture.

Bradley now is director of an organization called United In Peace. He is a prime mover of the national gang truce movement that emerged out of the 1992 Los Angeles riots. Since his release from prison in the late 1970s he has played prominent roles in various community development campaigns. He ran unsuccessfully for alderman of the city's 3rd Ward last year. But he is also aligned with 21st Century VOTE, a youth-oriented political group alleged by the police to be a front for the Gangster Disciples. Further, he acts as an unofficial spokesman for convicted murderer Larry Hoover, the imprisoned Gangster Disciple leader.

It is Bradley's connection to Hoover that taints his image. "King" Hoover has been in prison for more than 20 years and, according to police, has run the Gangster Disciples during that period. He and 38 others were indicted in August on numerous drug charges. Eight members of the gang were recently convicted in U.S. District Court on charges of drug trafficking. Hoover's trial is scheduled for October. Authorities infiltrated the gang's highest levels by hiding a transmitter in a paper-thin badge worn by Hoover's visitors at the Vienna Correctional Center in southern Illinois. The tapes allegedly captured Hoover bragging about the creation of 21st Century VOTE.

"I heard those tapes of Hoover, and I was reminded of the movie *Forrest Gump*," Bradley says. "I looked at the movie and saw Gump shaking hands with a dead president. So there's no doubt that the government can make anything sound or look like they want it to." Bradley may sound a bit paranoid on this point, but he has some justification: Several charges against members of another Chicago street gang, the El Rukns, were recently dismissed because of prosecutorial misconduct.

In the current climate of anti-crime hysteria churned up by the rise in real levels of crime, politicians feel justified in proposing the most draconian prescriptions possible. Lost in the rhetorical posturing of political crimefighting is any understanding of the social conditions that propel so many inner-city blacks toward the underground economy of crime and drugs. For far too many African-American youths in the crumbling post-industrial moonscapes of urban America, drug dealing seems to be a rational economic decision.

The underground economy is populated by "young black men—undereducated, unemployed, underparented, largely uncontrolled, and with little hope of escape," writes Norval Morris, a professor emeritus of law and criminology at the University of Chicago, in a recent op-ed piece in the *Chicago Tribune*. "Available to them are two avenues of employment: McDonald's at the minimum wage and trading in drugs at a considerably more lucrative rate. The latter, unlike the former, allows the young man to assist his family."

But lawmakers and mainstream commentators seem strangely oblivious to what those restricted choices mean for addressing the social causes of crime. Even the Democratic "opposition" to the hard-charging GOP hardly strays from the lock-em-up-tight approach dictated by conventional wisdom. Clinton's appointment of Gen. Barry McCaffrey as the new drug czar symbolizes an escalation rather than a rethinking of the drug war, accelerating the administration's already vigorous efforts to involve more federal officials. In his State of the Union address last January, for example, Clinton announced he was urging FBI director Louis J. Freeh to step up the agency's campaign to bust gangs that involve juveniles.

The 43-year-old Bradley has watched as this grim social dynamic has gnawed away at his South Side community. "The schools don't teach black kids like they should, so they come out of them deficient and without marketable skills. And then they're scorned for that," he explains. "And then because they have to dress a certain way to survive in their neighborhood, they're ridiculed out here in the mainstream. Man, there's so many barriers you wouldn't believe it."

Bradley himself has had to overcome a few barriers. He has been convicted twice: In 1971, he was placed on five years probation for two burglaries. In 1974, he pleaded guilty to two counts of burglary and armed robbery. He served a year in Statesville (Illinois) and three years on work-release. In 1989, he was granted a full pardon by Gov. James R. Thompson. But Bradley's relentless boosterism for Hoover and the Gangster Disciples—which he says Hoover has renamed "Growth and Development"—has rendered him an object of ridicule. He is widely lampooned in the media mainstream and his arguments are seldom taken seriously. "They would rather laugh at me and criticize the way I speak than deal with the issues I bring; ya know 'm sayin'?" he observes with a knowing smile. Many find that Bradley's unvar-

nished style of black inner-city speech disqualifies him from serious political debate.

But the very features that taint Bradley's mainstream image burnish his street status. He is recognized by young blacks throughout the city's South and West Sides and commands respect from those who have little respect for official authority figures. He also has won admiration from some in Chicago's black political establishment; he's worked as an administrative assistant to former singer and current Cook County Commissioner Jerry Butler.

As Bradley's own mixed public image illustrates, the issues surrounding Bradley, Hoover and 21st Century VOTE have an important class dimension. Many of the candidates who opposed Davis' connection to the "gang-banger" are themselves aligned with forces far removed from the underclass youths Bradley represents. "Most of our so-called black leaders are part of Chicago's historic middle class," Bradley notes. "And they feel threatened that another segment of the community is trying to gain leadership."

This sense of threat surfaced strongly when the middle class-oriented Chicago Urban League recently made common cause with 21st Century VOTE in a voter registration effort. Political leaders and commentators raked Urban League President James Compton over the coals for joining forces with the youth-oriented group. But Compton says he is concerned about reaching the very people who can only be reached by groups like 21st Century VOTE. Jesse Jackson, who has joined the National Rainbow Coalition to Chicago's Operation PUSH and has re-emerged as an influential force among the city's black leadership, also has come out in favor of the alliance. "Anybody who is willing to obey the law and engage in the political process and [observe] its rules should be pulled in. If you don't reach out to young people, you are irrelevant as a change agent. If you do reach out, you are roundly condemned." It's a dilemma that will be solved once it becomes clear that much of black America's future remains confined within the criminal justice context and needs help to escape. ▴

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apparently expected the latter.

Although the film made use of a couple of those—God forbid—overpayed Hollywood insiders, after careful consultation with Sr. Helen Prejean, it was still more real than anything Hollywood has produced in a long time. It's simply outlandish to impute a prankish or manipulative motive to this serious effort catalyzed by a true story and primarily driven by three people (Robbins, Sarandon and Prejean) who have spoken earnestly and—in the case of Prejean—eloquently against the death penalty.

Robbins and Sarandon are atypical Hollywood liberals in that they will both regularly get behind causes that go beyond the politically correct. Sarandon's efforts to help shut down the notorious School of the Americas is just one example. I mention this partly out of being utterly confounded by DeLibero's callow diatribe against her as being bland as pudding, her range reduced to two expressions. As far as I can see, Sarandon is only a half step behind Streep in range.

I concur with DeLibero on one point: This talk about the film being "evenhanded" is nonsense, kind of like calling a politician a moderate. The film (like Prejean herself) sees capital punishment clearly for what it is: murder.

Marc Levesque

Simplistic

I was confused and disappointed by Linda DeLibero's simplistic review of *Dead Man Walking*. Did we see the same movie? DeLibero implies that there is only one way—hers—of being against the death penalty. The rest of us risk being considered "well-intentioned liberals." Does she prefer bad intentions? Does she believe "liberals" to be incapable of articulating a position against the death penalty?

In the film I saw, photos of both the murderer and his victims as children demonstrated a common humanity and bond between parents whose hopes and dreams for their kids had been destroyed. DeLibero considers



emotion to be the "last thing one needed to bring to this controversy." But it is just our society's refusal to experience emotion when we choose to kill a human being that allows capital punishment to continue. As this film movingly portrays, we tell ourselves that the people on death row are garbage, and therefore not worthy of our feelings. We use lethal injection to pretend no one is being subjected to cruel and unusual punishment. Media reports of executions almost completely ignore the families of the executed. Crime victims who don't support the death penalty are also rarely seen.

DeLibero complains that Sister Helen is naive, but it is DeLibero who isn't asking herself why the talk shows she ridicules appeal to so many people, or why the death penalty is so popular. It is unfortunate that progressives have been unable to articulate concerns or goals in a way that connects with the experiences and beliefs of most people.

When DeLibero finds that this film "backs away from the possibility of any serious darkness or ambiguity that might challenge her unflinching faith," I am truly frightened at how dark a portrayal she might have preferred. No one would be interested or moved by a film that didn't show us the condemned.

Most disturbing was DeLibero's equation of being human with being "weak and silly." Sean Penn's condemned man is presented as a real person, and real people do experience anger, feel pain and love their mothers. We need to understand this to be true of "them" as it is of "us."

Ruth Lazarus
Oak Park, Ill.

Linda DeLibero replies: I wonder what the response to Dead Man Walking would have been if the condemned man had been the other killer, Matthew Poncelet's accomplice, who, as portrayed in the film, is clearly a brutal, conscience-less animal, possessed of neither the charm nor the good looks of a Sean Penn, nor the redemptive possibilities of a Matthew Poncelet. Imagine that, instead of proclaiming his love for Sister Helen, he'd spit in her eye right up to the end, and told the victims' parents that he'd kill those kids again if he had the chance. That character would be based on a "real person," too. (In fact, one of the two prisoners who served as models for the composite Poncelet character was such a man.) Yet I'd venture that it would be a great deal more difficult to work up the same sense of outrage we feel over Poncelet's death. Given a few shifts in the emotional climate of the final scene (no music, no weeping), we'd probably be cheering when the guy went under. Is he any less "human" than Poncelet, or any more deserving of death?

But we're asked to judge the immorality of capital punishment by just such a standard in Dead Man Walking. We feel the wrongness of state execution because Poncelet is presented as a repentant sinner, an "unformed ... little boy" who is finally capable of love. Many criminals fit this category; many do not. Unfortunately, a conviction based so clearly on our sense of the "worth" of the individual precisely replicates the system we have now, in which irrational factors such as the race and class of a defendant too often determine whether he'll live or die. Indeed, if we don't "rise above" these kinds of subjective calculations, we will never find an alternative to state execution that's both humane and just. Far from making us see just how difficult a task this is, Dead Man Walking merely allows us to nurture whatever feelings we had about capital punishment coming in—as the letters above make abundantly clear.

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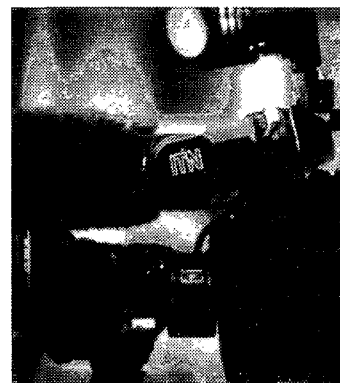
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GRANTA

I N T H E A R T S

In living pallor

Two new movies examine the nuances of white racism.

By Pat Dowell

In the movies, white racism is a black thing. Hollywood's film studios (and the rest of the media, for that matter) treat it like a topic that concerns only African-American filmmakers and audiences. Let Spike Lee and John Singleton take care of it. Both Lee and Singleton often dramatize the effects of racism on blacks, though each have tried to take sidelong looks at how race affects white experience. Lee has touched on the subject in his scatter-shot—and often stereotyped—portraits of Italian Americans in films like *Do the Right Thing* and *Jungle Fever*. Singleton, meanwhile, traced the evolution of a white skinhead in *Higher Learning* (1995).

And indeed, skinheads are the preferred face of racism in white America, which has always liked to think that bigots are the aberration in a tolerant

society. You can see that line of self-justification running through nearly all the Liberal Problem films dealing with minorities, from *Crossfire* (1947), with its psycho anti-Semite, on through to *The Birdcage*, where bigotry resides in that most despised of modern villains, a politician from Washington.

But our popular culture rarely addresses the garden-variety racism that props up our system of inequality, and two new movies try to do just that. *The Journey of August King* is set in the slaveowning South in 1815, and *A Family Thing* is a contemporary drama about the South's legacy of dual worlds for white and black.

In both movies, a white man must confront an inescapable kinship that destroys racial barriers. In the case of *August King*, a white farmer in the Carolina mountains, the kinship is not a matter of blood but of bonding and bondage. King (played by Jason Patric) crosses the path of a runaway slave, Annalees Williamsburg (played by Thandie Newton, who also played a slave in *Jefferson in Paris*). He gives her some food but doesn't

take her in—at first—because it is illegal to do so. Grudgingly, he decides to help her a little more, and a little more, until finally all else in his life begins to seem less important than helping her find the road north.

Adapted from the novel by John Ehle—who told *In These Times* that it is *not* a story about race—*The Journey of August King* is a parable of conscience set in the thorniest arena of American ethics. Director John Duigan, who grew up in Australia, may have his own nation's racial baggage to contend with, but he casts a fresh eye on American history, creating a palpable sense of the hardships of ordinary life and the ripening sadness of the young nation's dismal accommodation to slavery. King's journey is not only one of conscience awakened, but one that transforms his status in society. In order to protect Annalees as the sexually obsessed slaveowner played by

Larry Drake closes in, King gradually jettisons all that makes him a secure white man in his world. The animals bought at market are left by the roadside, each



The Journey of August King
Directed by John Duigan

A Family Thing
Directed by Richard Pearce

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one increasingly precious, and ultimately the wagon, too, is abandoned. This series of tests reaches its climax with King facing a critical choice: Admitting his actions to the law or covering up. By then he's come too far to turn back.

King is a sort of white Everyman—the good person who does nothing, until he finds himself rising to the occasion. He is a racist by default more than temperament, as are many of the farm people he encounters on the road home, who feel some sympathy for Annalees' plight but refuse to help. Slavery is a rich man's luxury in this history lesson, but the slaveless go along with it just the same—and take advantage where they can.

Earl Pilcher, played by Robert Duvall in *A Family Thing*, is August King 180 years later, after the legacy of going along has hardened into bedrock bigotry. He's not vocal about it, but it's there—and it is just as important to his standing as a white man as it was to August King's. When his mother dies, Earl gets a bombshell delivered in an envelope by the local minister. His mother's posthumous letter reveals that he was not her son at all, but the result of his father's rape of the family's black maid. He learns he has an older half-brother, Ray (played by James Earl Jones), and he goes to Chicago to seek him out.

On this urban turf, the two great actors play their duet of shock and attraction, each adjusting to a different kind of perceived humiliation. Earl learns what it is to be the odd man out in a neighborhood, while Ray's long-lived hatred of the Pilcher family (and Earl's daddy in particular) is dampened by the bond of a shared tragedy, their mother's death in childbirth. Mediating their emotions, with a con-

stant, irascible reminder of the indissoluble bond of blood, is scene-stealing Irma P. Hall as the blind but all-seeing Aunt T. She holds her own with Duvall and Jones, and stays just this side of a Mammy figure.

Duvall and Jones make *A Family Thing* a pleasure to watch; in fact, when Aunt T. gets around at the end to recounting the traumatic night of Earl's birth, there will not be a dry eye in the house. The writers are Billy Bob Thornton and Tom Epperson, the team behind the thoughtful 1992 crime drama *One False Move*. The director is Richard Pearce, who is at his best when chronicling everyday life and its practical intimacies (check out the 1979 homesteader drama *Heartland* at the video store). Duvall's gradual transformation into a man who can bring his black brother home to Arkansas is subtle and full of the minor adjustments that will undoubtedly someday come to all good ole boys.

The family riven by the arbitrary estrangements of race in *A Family Thing* is, of course, larger than the Pilchers. In the optimistic liberal tradition to which *A Family Thing* belongs, it's the family of America, not to mention all humankind. Both this movie and *The Journey of August King* are basically humanist tracts (a form that the elderly among you will remember) with an interesting '90s inflection—they attempt to map the uncharted territory inside the heads of white Americans who trade on the vague but certain knowledge that they are better (off) than black people.

It's a start. And with humanist tracts not exactly in abundant supply these days starts like these are not unwelcome. ◀

IN PRINT

The theory of poverty

By David Chappell

America *Unequal* is a welcome effort, during a particularly stingy and shortsighted period of our history, to revive the combination of generosity and long-term practicality that motivated the War on Poverty. Economists Sheldon Danziger and Peter Gottschalk, seasoned veterans of the war social scientists are still fighting over the War on Poverty, are willing to abandon many of the War on Poverty's assumptions and aims. This willingness lends an air of realism to their proposals for new policies that are more cautious than Lyndon Johnson's great domestic crusade. They provide those who sympathize with America's poor—who cannot muster the votes and foundation grants they once had—something they need more than ever: unsentimentally rational, empirically thorough analysis.

Their analysis shows that events have refuted an old belief about poverty. The American nation, conceived in Enlightenment and dedicated to the preposterous notion that all men are created equal, has long had an extravagant faith in economic progress—in the idea that a rising tide will lift all boats. Any doubts about the soundness of this faith got drowned out by the post-World War II boom, in which poverty declined almost as rapidly as the economy grew. Poverty continued to decline in the 1960s and 1970s, aided to some extent by Johnson- and Nixon-era programs, which assumed that growth was not enough, but nevertheless took continued growth for granted. The subsequent stagnation of the mid-to-late-1970s confirmed the faith by force of negation: When growth ended, poverty increased, despite the government programs.

The crisis in faith came—or should have come—in the 1980s, when growth began again, but poverty did not diminish. The tide rose, yet many boats sank. The most popular explanation of poverty became welfare dependency. Books

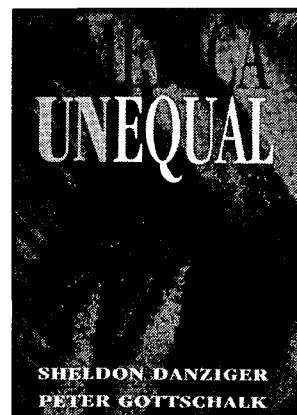
like Charles Murray's *Losing Ground* (1984) claimed that after the '60s poverty grew most among female-headed households, because such households depend on welfare. But Danziger and Gottschalk show that most female heads of household who have children (63 percent of them in 1991) worked for pay—and that their earnings were the biggest source of income for their families (61.5 percent in 1991, compared to only 10.3 percent from government transfers).

More generally, Danziger and Gottschalk argue, welfare dependency cannot be the cause of growing poverty because the inflation-adjusted value of welfare benefits has *decreased* significantly since the mid-'70s. "If rising welfare benefits distorted work effort and family structure, then falling benefits should have had the opposite effect. Yet there was no reversal in the trend in work effort after welfare benefits began to fall." People earned less because they got paid less. One trend makes this point clear: Real pay rates for men have declined since the early '70s, while real pay rates for women have actually grown (16 percent from 1973 to 1989). Since women started from a lower wage level, and since their economic dependence on husbands declined, women (especially those with children) still show higher poverty rates than men overall.

The most striking refutation of the Murray thesis comes from the experience of the only demographic group whose poverty rates have actually decreased since the '60s: the elderly. This is also the only demographic group whose handouts from government have increased.

While they cannot blame poverty on welfare, Danziger and Gottschalk cannot blame the Reaganite reaction against welfare, either. They painstakingly trace the recent growth and persistence of poverty to structural changes that depressed demand for low-pay work. "Changes in the labor market would have brought increased economic hardship," they write, "even if tax and social welfare policies had remained as they were in 1980."

Not content to criticize the errors of rival analysts of poverty, Danziger and Gottschalk propose some remedies. In doing so, they draw useful lessons from recent history. One "lesson of the past few decades is that education and training programs, which are much more popular with the public than cash assistance, are very expensive." Attractive as such programs are, they are not cost-effective. (This lesson was lost on the Clinton administration, which proposed "job training" programs without venturing to say who would create the jobs for which the workers were supposedly being trained.)



America Unequal
By Sheldon Danziger
and Peter Gottschalk
Harvard University Press
220 pp., \$26

Danziger and Gottschalk not only abandon popular ideas that do not work but also abandon ideas that probably would have worked, because they are unpopular. The most frustrating turn in the recent history of poverty was the Family Assistance Plan, a strikingly radical proposal from the Nixon administration that proposed a guaranteed minimum income for all. It appealed to right-wing critics of the War on Poverty, since it would have cut bureaucracy and government costs, and to left-wingers, too, since it would have given something useful directly to the poor, namely cash, rather than meddlesome "services" that enriched social workers and other middle-class professionals. But the plan was defeated in the Democratic U.S. Senate. The lesson, Danziger and Gottschalk write, is clear: "The history of redistributive maintenance strategies has taught us to be wary of attempts to provide cash assistance to the able-bodied without requiring work in return."

For political as well as economic reasons, Danziger and Gottschalk's remedies focus on improving "employment prospects." Most of all, this means federal make-work programs, more reminiscent of the New Deal than the War on Poverty. The so-called private sector, even with subsidies and free job training from government agencies, has not been able to provide jobs for all who need them, and Danziger and Gottschalk frankly insist that private corporations cannot replace government any more than government can replace corporations as sources of work in the foreseeable future.

Improvement of "employment prospects" also means new measures to make low-wage workers more capable of supporting families. The most realistic such measure is expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the only anti-poverty program to win substantial political support since the mid-'70s. This subsidy to the working poor, enacted in 1975, has already been expanded three times. Danziger and Gottschalk want to expand it further to give substantial benefits to childless workers, who now qualify for very little EITC. (It is odd that EITC has not been attacked, as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) has been, for encouraging the poor to have babies.) They also argue that EITC should become fully "refundable," so that the poorest workers, who earn so little as to owe no taxes, should get a payment, or negative tax.

The dry, bureaucratic tone of their argument marks the taming of strong social passions by a skeptical discipline that is lacking among most of the left-liberals who share Danziger and Gottschalk's precepts. But this raises a trou-

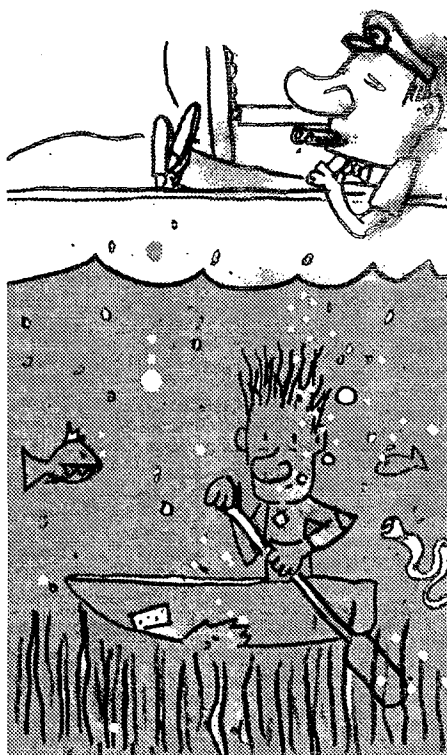
bling question: Who is the audience for this book? Though President Clinton invoked "values" in his State of the Union address in January, it is hard to imagine his risk-shy, compromise-craving, technocratic administration embarking on any imaginative new programs for the poor, who do not vote, let alone lobby. Clinton's one public works program, the "Ameri-Corps" national service, was substantially cut

back by Congress. NAFTA may have done more to speed the export of low-wage jobs than Reagan ever could. Policy-makers speak Danziger and Gottschalk's language, and many of them probably share their sympathy for society's downtrodden. But where will policy-makers with the will, or rather the irresistible mandate, to implement their ideas come from?

Valuable as their ideas are, two important things are missing. First, at their own level of rational analysis, Danziger and Gottschalk fail to confront fully the assumption they show to have been refuted: that growth will continue to benefit society as a whole. They only soften the assumption, saying growth is not enough: "We still need macroeconomic policies that promote growth, but we also need enhanced labor market and anti-poverty policies to augment the incomes of workers and families who have not benefited from economic growth."

They complain that poverty results not only from structural changes that skewed income distribution, but also from "slow growth," which makes redistribution harder than when the tide is rising briskly. They devote little attention to growth policies only because they assume that others are paying sufficient attention to them. They never say what our policies, or our analysis, should do if growth becomes impossible—if the growth our nation has experienced since the mid-19th century turns out to have been a historical fluke. Perpetual growth, the basic assumption of modern liberalism and its socialist offshoots, must sooner or later run into the physical limits of the planet.

But a greater shortcoming of *America Unequal* is that it never reaches above or below the level of rational argument. Danziger and Gottschalk go out of their way to warn against resuscitating plans that have proven unpopular, but they do not address the need to create positive popular pressure—to discipline the anger and organize the yearnings of the poor and their sympathizers. Rational plans are important. But in the absence of organized popular pressure, prospects for any plan, however rational, are dim. The misunderstanding of poverty among the public is largely a matter of faith: Americans need something to replace the superstition that growth is the natural human condition and that



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it will magically solve all social "problems." Rational analysis can help bury the old faith (though Danziger and Gottschalk themselves cling to a watered-down version of it), but probably cannot do much to create a new faith (or revive older ones) to motivate the disciplined, sustained mass pressure that policy-makers need to feel before they will make more than glancing blows at poverty.

Concerned intellectuals need to do more than analyze poverty and poverty programs. They need to link their work to the sources of social movements—at least to analyze what gives those movements hope, cohesion and self-confidence in the face of hopeless odds. William James' "The Moral Equivalent of War" (1910), Reinhold Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932), Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), and recent work on modern America's peculiarly radical separation of religion and politics by Stephen Carter, Glenn Tinder, Jim Wallis and others, all urge upon us the importance of heeding and cultivating irrational forces. As the Christian right and the Nation of Islam, among others, prove every day, such forces are not going to go away. It is time for partisans of left and liberal policy debates to start linking the issue of poverty to the soul as well as to gains in productivity and economic output. ◀

David Chappell, author of *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in the Civil Rights Movement* (Johns Hopkins, 1994), teaches history at the University of Arkansas.

California

Continued from page 27

gration "problem" as simple racism and xenophobia.

Tomasky argues that neither position provided answers for voters who had serious qualms about illegal immigration. And the failure to frame the issue as an inclusive appeal to the public good was, in Tomasky's view, a direct outgrowth of the progressive movement's current philosophical orthodoxy of identity politics. NYU sociologist Todd Gitlin's new book, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, underscores much the same point. "To me, the idea of the left is an idea of commonality and an idea of equality," Gitlin says. "If the left cannot express its attachment to the idea of a whole people or the centrality of equality in its thinking, then it's not the left."

To be fair, some within the anti-initiative campaign have made efforts to reach out to a broader group of voters. Last year, for example, some factions within the anti-CCRI campaign proposed a ballot initiative that would have competed with the Republicans' measure. Several civil rights groups, following the lead of President Clinton's pronouncement on the issue in July, had drafted a "mend it don't end it" answer with the 1996 No Quota Civil Rights Initiative. This measure would have established goals for admissions, hiring and contracting in schools and government and required agencies to make good-faith efforts to achieve those goals. Race and gender could be taken into consideration, but only

among a number of other relevant factors.

But the Campaign for Women's Rights and Civil Rights was bitterly opposed to the alternative initiative strategy and preferred to attack CCRI head-on. A deep division formed between the two camps and probably would have continued had the state attorney general not written an opinion last fall that the alternative initiative would eliminate minority outreach programs at universities. As a result, the initiative's supporters dropped their strategy in January.

Until anti-CCRI forces hit upon a broad, inclusive message, fundraising will also remain a problem. According to one staffer at the Campaign for Women's Rights and Civil Rights, who preferred to remain anonymous, fundraising has been slow, in part because it was not clear until fairly recently that CCRI would qualify for the ballot.

The Democratic Party is curiously absent from the financial statements of the opposition campaign. And although the California Business Roundtable, a coalition of 75 of the state's largest companies, supports affirmative action, it has yet to give any money to the opposition. Many groups are reluctant to give money because they believe that even if CCRI does pass, anti-initiative forces will be able to fight it in court, just as they have with Prop 187.

This belief is not only stopping up the flow of funds; it highlights another critical weakness of affirmative action's liberal defenders: an eagerness to await top-down, court-mandated solutions to problems requiring political deliberation. As Lemann and other writers have noted, insulating the issue of affirmative action from the larger court of public opinion has fed the perception that it is unfairly extending "special rights" to "special interests."

The opposition still has time to mount a successful campaign, and political observers point out that a clear message on the beneficial role of affirmative action programs would likely find a large, receptive audience, to judge by the recent troubles of CCRI backers. The initiative's sponsors almost failed to gather enough signatures to qualify it for the ballot. In December, the campaign was so low on funds that it could not pay American Petition Consultants, the Sacramento firm gathering the signatures, and the drive was suspended with only 200,000 signatures in mid-December.

After an injection of cash, including at least \$250,000 from the state Republican Party, the CCRI campaign was able to get nearly \$1.3 million and gathered about 1.1 million signatures. Of the 1.1 million, about 147,000 were obtained by volunteers and another 145,000 were the result of a direct mailing sent by Gov. Pete Wilson. The bulk—about 800,000—came from paid signature gatherers who received \$1 per signature. The state Republican Party has so far been the campaign's largest single donor.

"This is a manufactured issue funded by vast financial resources," says Karabel. "I'm not saying it won't work. But it's totally erroneous to see this as similar to Prop 13, which in 1978 was a genuine grass-roots tax revolt." ◀

Nina Schuyler is a San Francisco journalist who writes extensively about legal issues.

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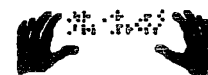
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Continued from page 40

time line, gender and species they belong to; they even forget whether they are flesh and blood or just holograms. Crew members rework their frequent panic attacks into stories about "alternate universes" and "alien mind-control," apt metaphors to convey their fragmented, hallucinatory perceptions of life aboard a starship. To compensate for this extreme fluidity of form and identity, *Star Trek* clings to the terra firma of race essentialism, reifying every aspect of culture and temperament into a racial stereotype: Vulcans are logical, Klingons are truculent, the Scots-Irish are mechanically inclined. Complex personalities are the unique burden of half-breeds like Spock, whose conflicting impulses speak to the tragedy of an impure bloodline.

While it grapples with the psychopathologies of machine-mediated consciousness, the Federation must also cope with economic collapse. A typical rust belt employment structure prevails: There seem to be no jobs at all outside of the swollen hospitality and gaming industries. It is thus doubly alarming that, given these all-too-familiar stresses, the Federation has devolved into a military dictatorship; behind a figurehead Federation Council, real power belongs to Starfleet Command. Luckily, Starfleet has its Space Jews to scapegoat: the Ferengi, a dwarf-like race of merchants and moneylenders that controls the saloons, brothels and gambling dens that comprise what's left of the civilian economy. When they're not plotting to sell the Federation to its enemies, they can be found ruminating on the Talmudic 285 *Rules of Acquisition*. Their cowardice, cunning and cosmopolitanism make the Ferengi the perfect anti-Semitic caricature, without which no fascist state would be complete.

On the surface, nothing disturbs the Federation's totalitarian consensus. No one ever reads a newspaper. No one ever votes. The only ruffle of political engagement comes from the Maquis, a band of colonists whose planets have been given to the Cardassian Empire in a border adjustment. When Starfleet offers to resettle them inside Federation territory, the Maquis revolt.

And who can blame them? Their career options basically amount to soldier, smuggler or busboy—and to judge by the *Enterprise's* absurd overstaffing, most of them would wind up in Starfleet. There they would languish at an unfathomable remove from autonomy and comprehension, leading lives of blinkered tedium punctuated by the recurrent menace of warp-core breach. Never certain from one moment to the next whether Picard is an alien doppelgänger or just deranged, the crew must nonetheless submit meekly to his insufferable displays of *führerprinzip*, or risk violating the Prime Directive: *Never second-guess the captain*. A Cardassian POW camp doesn't seem like much of a step down.

But the anxieties gnawing at the Federation's soul finally erupt into the open when the Borg ride into town. A race of half-human, half-machine cyborgs, the Borg advance a deceptive end-of-ideology agenda, stressing "assimilation" and "raising the standards of life" while they proceed to wipe out most of Starfleet. The interior of the Borg's stolidly

cube-shaped ship resembles a factory floor, all bare girders, catwalks and exposed wiring, while their uniforms, festooned with metal struts and rubber hosing, give the individual Borg something of the appearance of a walking carburetor. Yet for all their Fordist trappings, the Borg are a fully networked people; each one is linked by electro-mechanical conduits to all the others on the mothership. This odd mixture of Second- and Third-wave motifs—a union of proletarian mass-cult with cybernetic superorganism—mocks the Federation's empty bourgeois rhetoric of self-determination and individual rights. The Borg make explicit the Federation's suppressed understanding that human beings have become interchangeable appendages of machines. But their worst perversion is that they are a *collective*; each Borg's consciousness contributes equally to the shaping of their consensus. Starfleet cannot contain its fear when it learns that, among the Borg, *no one is in charge*.

The Federation has but one hope: a Manchurian candidate. The *Enterprise* captures a Borg teenager and subjects him to grueling brainwashing sessions. The Borg finally breaks down—a sense of his own individual identity starts to blossom. Then, fiendishly, Picard *sends him back*. Soon enough, the Borg collective is shattered by a full-throated, McEnroesque individualism; when next we meet them, nothing remains of their empire but a handful of bickering drifters in tin suits. Surveying the wreckage, Picard sidles up to a distraught Borg. "What the Borg need now," he murmurs, "is a *leader*...."

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I N T H E E N D

The Federation, or the Fourth Reich?

By Bill Boisvert

Physicists watch a lot of *Star Trek*. How could they resist? The various *Star Trek* shows all target them as the home-world demographic, paying homage with tales of heroic computations carried out by characters who pride themselves on their social isolation and emotionlessness.

Returning the favor, physics professor Lawrence M. Krauss has recently penned *The Physics of Star Trek*, a book-length appreciation of the "scientific" underpinnings of the series—i.e., those huge swaths of gobbledygook dialogue that the writers block out in the script with the notation "tech." While *Star Trek's* urgent exchanges about "metaphasic beings" and "inverting the polarity of the tetrion field" register as incoherent filler to most of us, to physicists they are intensely provocative transgressions of scientific orthodoxy.

But the physics of *Star Trek* is wasted on physicists. Bewitched by the siren song of scientific jargon, they seem oblivious to its meaning as a symbolic commentary on the political economy of outer space. The original *Star Trek* chronicled the Federation in its boisterous expansionary phase, when physics remained an untarnished emblem of technological potency. The voyage of the *Enterprise* through space recapitulated the progress of "enterprise" through history, as Kirk and Spock confronted a series of extraterrestrial throwbacks to the pre-modern—one day a squat jungle idol worshipped by grass-skirted tribespeople, the next a Greco-Roman priesthood exploiting a mass of helots. As one alien social hierarchy after another succumbed to the starship's phaser fire, scientific rationalism triumphed again and again over humanity's benighted past.

The Next Generation and its successor series, on the other hand, depict a sclerotic civilization chafing against rival empires on every side. In this troubled context—the closing of the Final Frontier—physics becomes a metaphor for the vicissitudes of imperial overstretch. The Federation's geopolitical instability is mirrored by ominous lapses in the laws of nature; the fabric of physical reality itself becomes horribly frayed and perme-

able. The *Enterprise* finds itself constantly struggling to seal off "quantum fluctuations" and "subspace anomalies," disastrous rifts in the space-time continuum through which trans-dimensional aliens or a tide of anti-time might inundate the galaxy.

But the really puzzling conundrums of *Star Trek* have little to do with physics. To unravel them, you need a whole panel of experts—an anthropologist, a clinical psychologist, certainly a labor economist. Why, for example, does the *Enterprise* need a crew of thousands when the android Data can—and often does—run the ship all by himself? Given "replicators" that can fabricate unlimited quantities of ready-to-eat meals out of sheer nothingness, why is the Federation beset both by sporadic hunger and by a surfeit of chefs, bartenders, waiters—a whole host of degraded

food-service workers? And why does the Federation plant colonists on every M-class planet it can find? What demographic catastrophe drives these settlers to the unpeopled reaches of the quadrant? Some 24th-century equivalent of a pogrom or a potato famine?

These contradictions are only the tip of the iceberg. What emerges from a long and addictive exposure to the various *Star Trek* shows is an eerie premonition of our own future, of a time when human society and psyche have all but dissolved in the face of burgeoning information technologies. In the future according to *Star Trek*, transporters atomize and reconstruct your body at the flick of a switch, plastic surgeons can pass you off as almost any alien life form; holodecks immerse you in life-like virtual reality psychodramas. The line separating reality from simulation grows progressively blurrier, and virtually every episode finds the cast caught up in some sort of identity crisis. People lose track of which

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